

H. Ref.

768-2 Conder

<36636366870010

<36636366870010

Bayer. Staatsbibliothek

ON
Protestant Nonconformity.

R

VOL. II.

ON

Protestant Nonconformity.



BY JOSIAH CONDER
ON

Protestant Nonconformity.

It may be supposed that this subject has already been treated in the same manner as a distinct party, but it is not so; and I will add, in a given number, the name of the person who has written it.
Dover.

IN TWO VOLUMES
VOL. II.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY W. H. COLEMAN, ST. MARK'S CHURCH YARD.

NEWCASTLE.

ON

Protestant Nonconformity.

BY JOSIAH CONDER.

R
“ We are to be concerned for this interest, not merely as the cause of a distinct party, but of truth, honour, and liberty ; and I will add, in a great measure, the cause of serious piety too.”

DODDRIDGE

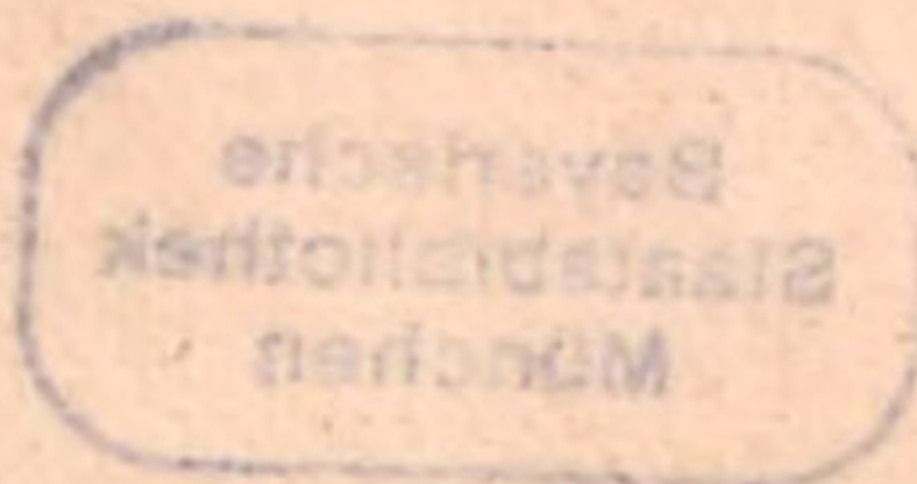
IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR JOSIAH CONDER, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD.

MDCCCXVIII.



ON

Protestant Nonconformity.

BY JOSIAH CONDOR.

We are to be considered for his interest, not merely as the cause of
a distinct party, but of truth, honesty, and liberty; and I will add, in a great
measure, the cause of serious piety too.

DONNINGTON

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR JOSIAH CONDOR, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD.

MDCCLXXIII.

Bayerische
Staatsbibliothek
München

BOOK III.

ON THE RITES AND SERVICES OF THE CHURCH.

CHAP. I.

The Rule of Public Worship.

§ 1. **W**HEN Martin Luther first published his ninety-five theses against Indulgencies, nothing could be more remote from his thoughts, than any project of delivering his countrymen from the Papal thralldom. Could he have anticipated the consequences of that bold measure, he would have shrunk with horror from the prospect. At that period, he entertained no suspicion against the Divine origin of the Papacy. His professions of dutiful respect for the authority of the Holy See were perfectly sincere; nor was it till the unjust and oppressive measures taken by the Court of Rome to silence him, had put him upon the necessity of self-defence, that he proceeded to examine the principles upon which his unconditional submission was exacted; and, pushing on his in-

The sufficiency of the Scriptures, the foundation-stone of Protestantism.

quiries and attacks, from one doctrine to another, began at length to shake the very foundations of the Romish Church.

The discovery of truth, in all cases in which it is not fortuitous, is an achievement of great difficulty, although, having once been discovered, truth of all kinds may be apprehended with ease. This is particularly the case with regard to those grand but simple propositions, which rank among the first principles of moral science. They were arrived at by slow and painful efforts; while they who were the instruments of eliciting them, were not, in many instances, fully conscious of the nature of the discovery. They were in the situation of a mariner driven by the exigencies of pursuit or bad weather, to harbour in some unknown position, the general features of which he has not time to explore; his only object being the present shelter it affords, and leaving it to others, who may follow in the same track, to avail themselves of its natural advantages. The most splendid actions, those which have been attended by the most beneficial results to mankind, have seldom taken their rise in enlarged views of the principles which they involve. The first step has been taken under the impulse of duty; and it has not been till the individuals were called upon to combat its consequences, that general principles have begun to occupy their attention.

Those very principles which could alone justify their conduct, would probably have been disclaimed by them with utter repugnance, had they been presented under the different modifications of which they are susceptible. No ordinary degree of moral intrepidity is requisite, to dare all the consequences of admitted truths.

The principle upon which Luther was ultimately driven to take his stand, although he was far from having, at first, any distinct perception of its general bearings,—the principle upon which alone he was able to maintain his ground, was, the *sufficiency and exclusive authority of the HOLY SCRIPTURES*, as the sole standard of religious truth. This cardinal article of Protestantism was his fortress; he found it impregnable; and thus intrenched, he was able to bid defiance to the leagued powers of darkness. To the authorities of popes and councils, to the dogmas of the schools, to the decisions of the beatific doctor, and to all the sophistry of the casuists, he opposed simply the Bible, that sole umpire, that only ecclesiastical authority in matters of faith. This was the weapon, “the sword of the Spirit,” with which he achieved the greatest moral victory that has been won since the establishment of Christianity.

Among a large class even of Protestants,

however, this grand truth, although bearing all the marks of clearness and certainty which characterize the principles of science, is far from being recognised as entitled to an unqualified assent. Like other general truths, in the absence of those circumstances which necessitate their being resorted to as the immediate rules of action, it is admitted in speculation, and then laid by in the mind's dormitory, among the rusty weapons and obsolete armour of intellectual warfare. There seems to prevail, indeed, in many cases, a secret dread of its being brought into use, as a rule of universal application; there is, at least, a strong propensity to stop short of its full development, as if, when pushed beyond a certain extent, it became unsafe to follow it out in practice. A principle true in itself, cannot, however, lose the character of truth, in consequence of its being carried too far, unless it can be proved that in its application it involves a contradiction of some other equally certain principle, which prescribes its limitation. The sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures, cannot be shewn to have the least hostile relation to any truth of equal authority; the limitations by which it has been attempted to fetter its application, rest entirely on human policy. Various methods have been adopted to deprive Protestants of the free use and full benefit of this fundamental

principle of the Reformation, among which the following are the grounds upon which its application has been most plausibly resisted.

§ 2. First, The sufficiency of the Scriptures has been impugned, on the ground that ecclesiastical tradition is, on certain points, a necessary guide. This is the plea of the Romanist, who contends for the equal authority of Apostolic tradition, as orally transmitted through successive ages, without interruption, by the Church of God; it being a matter of indifference, according to his argument, whether the doctrines originally given by Divine Revelation, are to be found in the written records, or have been thus delivered by word of mouth. Protestants professedly reject this notion with abhorrence, as subversive of the only solid basis of faith. It has been, indeed, the fruitful source of the grossest impositions ever practised upon the credulity of mankind. Under similar pretences, the Jewish doctors contended for the authority of the Mishna, as embodying the oral law; making the commandments of God of no effect by their traditions: "In vain do they worship me," said our Saviour, "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Yet, although in contending with the Papist, a due jealousy has been manifested for the exclusive claims of the Scriptures, as the only inspired authoritative standard of faith, human au-

Tradition
not an au-
thoritative
rule.

thorities have been on other occasions appealed to, as possessing a force little short of what the Church of Rome ascribes to tradition. It is in a spirit not very different from that of Popery, that the authority of antiquity, the authority of the fathers, the authority of the Church, are called in by Protestant controvertists, in support of opinions and practices, for which the sacred volume affords no sanction. There is, indeed, an obvious sense, in which these may be regarded as authorities, but it is a sense essentially different from that in which the term is employed to express the claims of Divine Revelation. There is the authority attaching to a human record, which consists simply in the internal marks of veracity; but the authority of the Divine records partakes of the authority of a law. With regard to the one, belief is reasonable, but it is at our option to believe; with regard to the latter, there is superinduced upon the reasonableness of believing, the highest obligation to the exercise of faith. When it is asserted, that the Scriptures are the only standard in matters of religious duty, it is not implied that they are the only possible source of information with regard to such subjects as are connected with our faith or our practice, but that the Divine testimony in the Scriptures is the only basis upon which belief can, as a religious duty, rest; the only

legitimate evidence by which the truth of what is proposed to our reception as the matter of faith, can be established. The highest degree of credibility which belongs to human records, when ascertained to be genuine, amounts only to this, that in the judgment of men of competent understandings, yet fallible in their decisions, and limited in their opportunities of knowledge, things were so; but, without any impeachment of their veracity, there is still room to consider them as mistaken. With respect to the rule of faith, the veracity of the human witness is accompanied with the infallibility of inspiration, and hence results the certainty that what is recorded as revealed, is true.

The three points usually referred to, as warranting the notion of the validity of the authority of Tradition, are, the integrity of the Canon of Scripture, the obligation of the Christian Sabbath, and the practice of Infant Baptism. Each of these, it is imagined, rests upon evidence distinct from the Scriptures; and that, therefore, the practice of every church involves a tacit admission of the necessity of some collateral or auxiliary authority, to supply the deficiencies of the inspired standard.

[1.] The genuineness and integrity of the New Testament records, are not, however, the matter of faith, but a previous question deter-

Objected
exception as
to the Canon
of Scripture.

minable by the laws of historical evidence. Those who lived nearest the times of the inspired writers, had, in some respects, superior advantages for ascertaining the fact; and their unanimous concurrence in a declaration concerning it, is entitled to the highest consideration, as part of the chain of external evidence substantiating the authenticity of the sacred Canon. But neither does the genuineness of the Apostolic writings, rest simply on the declaration of any Council that they are genuine, but rather on evidence antecedently existing, which afforded the ground of that decision; nor can their authority, as inspired writings, be made in the least to depend on the testimony of Tradition with respect to their authenticity. That testimony is of no other avail, than to establish the historical fact, that the sacred writings composing the New Testament, were so early received by the Church as constituting the Canon of Christian Scripture. The Divine claims of Revelation to individual reception, are wholly independent of Tradition, and these are what are intended by the exclusive authority of the sacred Scriptures.

Objected
exception as
to Infant
Baptism.

[2.] The practice of Infant Baptism, considered as a fact, it is equally within the competent province of Tradition to substantiate, by affording in its support the rational evidence of ancient precedent. From this precedent we

may fairly reason as to the construction which was put upon the scriptural command—to baptize, by those who lived the nearest to the period when Christian Baptism was instituted, adducing this consideration in support of the strong probability that the practice of Infant Baptism did not originate in a departure from the Apostolic directions. In ascertaining the import and design of the Scriptural command, a stress is with propriety laid on the testimony of ancient writers; but the validity of Infant Baptism itself does not rest upon either the opinions or the practice of the early Christians. Historical authorities must be allowed their due weight, as evidence of the pre-existing law, but the obligations of duty can have no other basis than the revealed will of Christ.

[3.] The authority of what has been termed the Christian Sabbath, is supposed principally to be derived from Tradition, since no specific command substituting the first day of the week for the seventh, as a Sabbath, is to be found in the New Testament. In this case, however, it is not less obvious, than in the preceding one, that the evidence of a pre-existing obligation, and the source of that obligation, are considerations essentially distinct. Waiving, therefore, the question, how far the Scriptures contribute sufficient information for our guidance in this respect, (to say nothing of the arguments in fa-

Objected
exception as
to the Sab-
bath.

vour of the moral expediency of such an observance, in the absence of specific command,) it is sufficient to remark, that Tradition (which is but another word in this reference for historical documents,) cannot have the virtue of a law, or supply, in the silence of the Scriptures, the place of a rule of faith.

Alleged insufficiency of the Scriptures, incapable of remedy.

For even were we to allow, with regard to any one of these points, that the Scriptures are deficient in clearness, and so far practically insufficient, the supposed difficulty is not at all removed by calling in the aid of Tradition, because the authority of Revelation cannot extend beyond what is actually revealed. The rule of faith, that which constitutes the only certain evidence of duty, is, the Divine testimony. Where this leaves us in comparative uncertainty, it is that lower degree of evidence pre-supposed by doubt, upon which we are called to regulate our belief and obedience; and how many are the occasions on which, in the common transactions of life, our decisions and exertions are necessarily determined by mere probabilities! With the judgment of others, respecting the degree of clearness attending Revelation, we have little concern: human opinion adds nothing to the evidence of truth. What is revealed is certain; but it is equally certain, whether it is believed by us or not; and to any declaration on the part of un-

inspired men, that it is revealed, no certainty can attach, because that declaration rests simply upon opinion, and cannot oblige the conscience. The only basis of religious duty is the Divine command; but all the commands of God are not attended by the same degree of clearness. What is virtually comprehended in any Divine precept, is as much our duty, though not so obviously, as what is conveyed by specific injunction; but in these instances, the existence or the application of the command is a fact which remains to be determined by a process of Scriptural induction or moral reasoning. Such reasonings, however, although they may serve to ascertain what is duty, cannot be said to constitute the rule itself, or to originate the obligation, any more than the private exposition of a human law can claim to render that law more binding. A declaratory law requires in the instituter, nothing less than the same legislative right which authorized the original enactment. The authority of the sacred Scriptures, is that of Inspiration. A declaration of the import of any part of the Scriptures, must, in order to be binding upon our belief, proceed from men who are themselves inspired. Tradition, then, and human opinion, which have no pretensions to the character of Inspiration, can possess no authority similar to that which in the sacred Scriptures claims our

implicit submission. Thus, the Bible is incapable of receiving any aid in remedy of its supposed insufficiency. It is not merely the supreme, the ultimate, but the only certain rule of duty. That which contributes to establish the certainty of this rule, forms no part of the rule itself; that which adds to its clearness, adds nothing to its authority; our obligations, in matters both of faith and practice, are determinable by that rule alone.

Reason not
in the same
sense a rule.

§ 3. A second method, in which it has been attempted to embarrass the application of this fundamental article of Protestantism, is, by contending that the Bible itself pre-supposes and recognises other rules of human action, such as the natural law of conscience, and the light of reason, and that consequently it cannot be justly said that it is the *only* rule. This apparently irrelevant argument has been gravely brought forward in order to confute the notion that all knowledge is formally contained in the Scriptures. Some of the old Nonconformist controvertists appear to have been betrayed, by their zeal, into this extravagance of opinion, far beyond the protection of the argument. Hooker has much the advantage over his opponent, when he remarks in reply: "The testimonies of God are true, the testimonies of God are perfect, the testimonies of God are all-sufficient for that purpose for which they

“ are given. Therefore, accordingly, they do
“ receive them; we do not think that in them
“ God hath omitted any thing needful unto his
“ purpose, and left his intent to be accomp-
“ lished by our devising. But the absolute
“ perfection of Scripture, is seen by relation
“ unto that end whereto it tendeth.”* The spe- * B. ii. § ult
cific commands contained in the word of God,
are assuredly not the only rules of human ac-
tions. The design of Revelation has no such
positive reference to the regulation of social af-
fairs, but relates almost exclusively to the dis-
covery of those supernatural truths, the know-
ledge of which is necessary to salvation, but
which knowledge reason could not supply.
The sufficiency of the Bible, as a rule of faith
and practice, is to be considered as exclusive,
not of other means of rational guidance, but of
all other sources of authority in matters of re-
ligious duty. It is not implied, that nothing
but what Scripture commands is lawful, but
that nothing which Scripture has not made to
be duty, can, as respects the concerns of reli-
gion, be constituted our duty by the authority
of man. The word of God is our only rule, in
the sense both of a law and a standard; a rule
sufficient, as opposed to all deficiency; exclu-
sive, as relates to the Divine authority from
which it emanates; universal, as embracing all
the principles of human actions; and ultimate,

as admitting of no appeal. For all religious purposes, it is literally the only rule, because the Divine command constitutes the only reason, as well as the only law of religious actions; and there can, therefore, be no scope for other rules, except with regard to the mere outward circumstantialia of religious duties, which do not come within the obligations of any law.

On the hypothesis of an authorized interpreter.

§ 4. A third ground on which the opponents of the practical application of the grand principle under discussion take their stand, is this: They concede that the Scriptures are the only standard of religious truth, but this standard must needs have *an authorized interpreter*. The Church is, according to this notion, “a witness” and a keeper of Holy Writ,” and as such, hath not only “power to decree rites or ceremonies,” but hath also “authority in controversies of faith,” or, in other words, the right of interpreting Scripture. It is truly astonishing that an hypothesis of this kind, so fatal, were it tenable, to the cause of Protestantism, should ever have been heard of out of the precincts of the Romish hierarchy. Yet has this claim been extensively regarded as inseparable from the honour and the interests of the English Episcopacy. We have seen it in the present day revived by a powerful faction in the Establishment, as among the chief reasons of their determined hostility to the plan of

the British and Foreign Bible Society. No one can imagine that the coalition of Episcopalians and Protestants of other sects, in that admirable Society, would have excited so much jealousy and alarm, had the Prayer Book been permitted to take the Bible under its guardianship. It is the principle on which the society was instituted, and what is implied by that principle—the sufficiency and exclusive authority of the Bible without note or comment, which have roused into full play the latent *anti-Protestantism* which seems inherent in all establishments. The institution of the British and Foreign Bible Society, has served, in this respect, as a grand experiment, to determine the relative state of the moral atmosphere within and without the pale of the National Church, and to shew what is the degree of affinity between the spirit of Episcopacy, and the spirit of the Bible. Serious alarms have been expressed by the clergy, as to the probable effects of an unrestricted circulation of the Scriptures, in reference to the safety of the Established Church; and language has again and again been suffered to escape from Church-men in the warmth of their anger and the imbecility of panic fear, which, from the lips of a Dissenter, would have sounded like the bitterest sarcasms. Many, indeed, of the opponents of the Bible Society, have not scrupled boldly and unequi-

vocally to maintain the unsuitableness of the Bible, as well as its inefficiency, in the hands of the common people.

Argument
from the in-
ternal cha-
racter of the
Scriptures.

To all such representations as these, as well as the hypothesis they are employed to support, is to be opposed, in the first place, *The internal character of the sacred Scriptures themselves.* The Scriptures, which alone could supply adequate proof of the existence and claims of an authorized interpreter, are not merely silent on the subject, but furnish evidence utterly fatal to all such pretensions. The circumstances under which they were originally promulgated, prove that they were designed for popular use, and for the most unrestricted publicity. With respect to the Jewish Scriptures, it will scarcely be contended, that “the Church” is, in the sense intended by the phrase, a “witness and “keeper” of holy writings, which were, ages prior to the Christian era, the peculiar property of the Hebrew nation. The key to the ancient prophecies, the true *means* of interpretation, is undoubtedly in the possession of the Gentile Church; but the *right* of interpretation must needs belong to those more especially to whom were originally “committed the oracles of “God.” It must be the New Testament, then, to which these factitious claims relate. But do the Gospels require the illustration of an authorized expositor? Few will deny that these are suf-

ficiently intelligible to be entrusted in the hands of all descriptions of persons. Besides, the Church does not go so far as to claim a right of interpretation extending to *facts*. The doctrinal parts of Scripture, therefore, can alone be alluded to as requiring the light of an authorized exposition to be thrown upon their mysterious contents, in order to their being rendered safe or intelligible to the vulgar. And now we arrive at the true meaning of the objection. It is *the Epistles* of which "*the Church*" has always shewn this prudent jealousy, misquoting the words of St. Peter, as the ground of ignorant allegations against the writings of St. Paul, and holding out that text *in terrorem*, to deter all unauthorized interpreters from trenching upon the prerogative attached to the true succession. Hence that marked distinction in the Liturgy, between the Gospels and the Epistles, which is expressed by the direction to stand up while the former are read, but to hear the latter read sitting; a distinction originating in the days of the darkest superstition, and the pernicious influence of which is very apparent in the indelible prejudice so prevalent among even the better informed church-people, in favour of the superior sanctity of the historical portions of Inspiration. Yes: it is the Epistles, respecting which these apprehensions are entertained. From what other source can con-

2 Peter iii.
16.

troversies of faith arise? These, these are the vantage ground of heresy and schism, which it becomes expedient to appropriate and inclose with the circumvallations of ecclesiastical authority.

Character of
the Epistles.

But what is the genuine character of the sacred Epistles? They were letters addressed to collective bodies of believers, designed to be publicly read in the assembly “to all the holy “brethren;” letters which treated of social duties common to all the members of the Christian society, referring, often in terms of familiar and affectionate regard, to many individuals by name. It was given by our Lord, as a characteristic of his own ministry—“The poor have “the Gospel preached unto them;” and it is expressly recorded concerning those, to whom his instructions were addressed, that “The common “people heard him gladly.” The ministry of the Apostles was conducted on the same principles as that of their Divine Master, nor did the general results differ. “Not many wise “men after the flesh, not many mighty, not “many noble,” obeyed the call of the Gospel: the primitive churches were composed of what the world deemed baser materials. All intellectual differences among those who had embraced the Christian discipleship, were merged in a perfect religious equality; and to the members at large of these associations, without dis-

crimination, were addressed those exhortations which pre-suppose a competency individually to choose, to judge, to distinguish between things that differ, to understand what the will of the Lord is, to prove all things, to try the spirits whether they were of God. A restricted right of interpretation with regard to the letters conveying these very instructions, would have annulled their force and meaning. Such a restriction could not exist in a society in which the means of interpretation were common to all, and the religious rights of all were equal. With more shew of reason might it be maintained, that the discourses of our Saviour to the multitude, required an authorized interpreter, since it is evident that even the disciples themselves were sometimes unable to apprehend the design of his parables. As to the qualifications requisite for understanding aright the doctrine of the Apostles, St. Paul, in his emphatic style, thus expresses himself: "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise." In this consisted the only danger of misinterpretation, the pride of wisdom, the want of simplicity of mind. At what period in ecclesiastical history, then, was the common right of Christians forfeited by their supposed incompetence to understand the Scriptures, so as to necessitate the erection of a tribunal of interpretation?

That incompetency cannot be charged on the obscurity of the Scriptures, for they have undergone no change, and all the difficulties connected with a learned language have been long vanquished by translators. Would it not be just rather to argue, that the incompetence of the people at any period, must be charged upon their instructors? But, in fact, no such occasion for an authorized interpreter, has ever arisen out of the ignorance of the people, and if it had, it could not have been the ground of depriving them of the free use of their moral faculties. The supposed necessity of an interpreter, has originated in those controversies, of which the great mass of the people have always been innocent; and claims of this nature have been maintained with a pertinacity exactly proportioned to the degree of neglect in which the Scriptures themselves have been suffered to remain. In the hands of the people, the Bible would have been safe from perversion, and free from obscurity; their obligations to obey its sacred precepts, are not greater than their interest in arriving at its general import. “They
“have no temptation to abuse it, by forcing
“upon it a language foreign from its original
“intention: their concern in religion is of the
“purest and most unsuspecting nature, since
“the only advantage which it is conceivable
“they can derive from it, is assistance towards

“ holy living and dying. If it fails to put them
 “ in possession of a share in the common
 “ salvation, there is no subordinate end to be
 “ answered, no private emolument attainable
 “ by its means to compensate for their loss. If
 “ it is ineffectual to enlighten and to save them,
 “ there is no other benefit which they can flat-
 “ ter themselves with the hope of deriving from
 “ it.”*

*MR. ROBT
HALL.

What was predicated of the religion of Jesus Christ, is not less true in reference to the inspired medium of Revelation : it was originally calculated, and it is still calculated for the plainer part of mankind.† God has in this res-

† Bishop HORSLEY, in one of his Sermons, has the following admirable remarks: “ I will not scruple to assert, that
 “ the most illiterate Christian, if he can but read his English
 “ Bible, and will take the pains to read it in this manner,
 “ (*viz.* comparing parallel passages) will not only attain all
 “ that practical knowledge which is necessary to his salvation,
 “ but, by God’s blessing, he will become learned in every
 “ thing relating to his religion in such degree, that he will
 “ not be liable to be misled, either by the refined arguments
 “ or by the false assertions of those who endeavour to ingraft
 “ their own opinion upon the oracles of God. He may safely
 “ be ignorant of all philosophy except what is to be learned
 “ from the sacred books ; which indeed contain the highest
 “ philosophy adapted to the lowest apprehensions. He may
 “ safely remain ignorant of all history, except so much of the
 “ history of the first ages of the Jewish and of the Christian
 “ Church as is to be gathered from the canonical books of
 “ the Old and New Testament. Let him study these in the
 “ manner I recommend, and let him never cease to pray for

* "Thoughts
on the best
means of re-
viving the
Dissenting
Interest."

pect also, "chosen the foolish things of the
" world to confound the wise." A neglect and
contempt of the common people, as Dr. Dod-
dridge has well remarked,* "is far from being
" the spirit of the Gospel." This anti-christian
spirit is, however, unequivocally manifested in
the sentiment now combated. In the common
people, it seems to be imagined, that belief is
something quite different from what takes place
in the minds of those who are born to the privi-
lege of exercising their faculties;—that it is, with
regard to them, a mechanical process, by
which their opinions are made to take the shape
and impress of the artificial mould prepared by
those who have the authority. What are human
creeds, into the making and enforcing of which
this arrogated right of interpretation mainly re-
solves itself, but expedients for giving to the
religious sentiments of the vulgar, a passive
uniformity, which the Scripture-rule is not suf-

" the illumination of that Spirit by which these books were
" dictated; and the whole compass of abstruse philosophy
" and recondite history shall furnish no argument with which
" the perverse will of man shall be able to shake this learned
" Christian's faith. The Bible thus studied will indeed prove
" to be what we Protestants esteem it, *a certain and suffi-*
" *cient rule of faith and practice*, a helmet of salvation;
" which alone may quench the fiery darts of the wicked."
Bishop HORSLEY'S Sermon on Psalm xcvi. 7. " *Nine*
" *Sermons,*" p. 227.

ficiently exact, or sufficiently clear, or sufficiently authoritative to produce? Thus, while the Scriptures are professedly acknowledged to be the only rule, this rule must needs be determined and defined by another rule, which other rule is itself to be tried by the first and only rule. Matchless paradox! Who does not perceive that this self-regulated standard of interpretation, which pretends to derive its authority from that on which it assumes to fix a meaning, becomes by this means, in effect, the ultimate rule of faith, and that the interpreter takes the place of Revelation?

Not only is this hypothesis of an authorized interpreter disproved by the silence, as well as at variance with the internal character, of the sacred Scriptures; its absurdity may be shewn by the necessary condition of such a claim, namely, that *the Church invested with this authority, must be one and infallible.* On this point, the Papist argues far more consistently than our half-Protestants; and since, as he contends, the consciousness of infallibility would naturally, not to say necessarily, accompany the possession of the gift, a Church making no such pretensions on behalf of its rulers, tacitly concedes a point essential to the hypothesis. If a right of interpretation belongs to any church, no doubt the Church of Rome has the most to advance in support of

An Authorized interpreter ought to be ONE and INFALLIBLE.

her pretensions, and could these be substantiated, Luther was a schismatic and Calvin something worse. The Church of Rome is possessed of all those external characteristics on which the advocates of the English Episcopacy found its mysterious claims: hers, most peculiarly, are the *succession*, the sacraments, the power to regenerate and to confirm, to absolve from sin, and to confer the Holy Ghost, to sanctify, and to consecrate, and to perform all the other transcendent functions of the *Christian priesthood*; hers, too, must of necessity be the original power to decree rites and ceremonies and to determine controversies in matters of faith, since, through no other channel, or rather, from no other source, can all these precious things have been derived by any Protestant episcopate. Besides, an authorized interpreter must needs be furnished with the requisite means of certainty; for the authority to know, without the possession of the means of knowledge, would be something very near a non-entity. Were we to admit that this wonderful gift is not the exclusive property of the Church of Rome, but that the authority is vested in more than one depository of infallibility, it is obvious that the decisions of these collateral interpreters, must be identical. Two authorized interpreters at variance, would present a spectacle as monstrous as that of two rival

popes fulminating against each other their respective infallible anathemas. Yet such is the predicament in which the Church of England stands in relation to the Church of Rome. With regard, however, to the matter of interpretation, there appears to be this difference between them. The Church of Rome, *ex hypothesi*, cannot err, but nevertheless, in point of fact, if Protestants may be believed, she *has erred*; the Church of England disclaims infallibility, but nevertheless she has *not* erred. Yet, perhaps, the seemingly incompatible claims of these authorized interpreters, may admit of adjustment in this manner: the Church of Rome is infallible within the States of the Church, the Church of England, within the British dominions. Still, the existence of either authority, stands in need of being proved. An authority which claims this extensive control over the dictates of Inspiration itself, must be accredited by nothing short of those miraculous tokens which uniformly accompany supernatural powers. In this instance, again, the Church of Rome is consistent in asserting her power to work miracles; and the above-named functions of the priesthood, may possibly be represented as the standing miracles of Episcopacy. A miracle, however, in the strict sense of the term, is not an outward sign of something supposed or believed to take place, but a real visible

transaction, which appeals not to faith but to the senses in the language of ocular demonstration. And surely, if the first communication of Revelation by prophets and apostles, required to be miraculously attested in order to command belief, still greater need would there be, that an authority extending to the whole substance of Revelation, should be so shewn to be of God. Were it, therefore, true, that without an authorized interpreter, the Bible is not a certain rule, and we yet had not the requisite means of arriving at certainty as to the conflicting pretensions of the several interpreters, all basis of rational belief is at once destroyed, and no intermediate point is left on which the mind can rest, between implicit credulity, and hopeless scepticism.

The authority supposed in the hypothesis of a restricted right of interpretation, would, in fact, *be absolutely destructive of the moral exercise of the rational faculties which enters into the essence of religious duty.* To believe on insufficient evidence, is not faith, but credulity. In matters of religion, human testimony amounts to absolutely nothing in point of evidence, and the belief which has no better foundation, is built upon uncertainty, is not in truth a reasonable belief. As the Divine authority is the only source of our obligation to believe, so is the Divine testimony the only certain evidence of

truth. The interposition of human authority in the character of an interpreter, between the conscience and the substance of Revelation, at the same time that it suspends the freedom of choice, weakens the force of obligation. To believe a thing because it is revealed, is one thing; to believe that it is revealed, is another. What is revealed, is certain, but no such certainty can attach to the interpretations of Scripture, which rest on human opinion; these address themselves to the reason, not to the conscience; they claim to be examined, but have no authority; they add nothing to the *evidence* of revealed truth, and the *claims* of Revelation are incapable of being strengthened. What we were under an obligation to believe, previous to the decision of any church or council as to the matter of belief, just so much and no more are we bound to believe, and equally, and only equally bound to believe, subsequently to such decision.

But when human interpretations are imposed, instead of the Scriptures, as the rule of faith, a rule doubtful in itself, and by which we are under no obligation to abide, is substituted for one which is at once infallible and authoritative. Opinion is substituted for Revelation, probability for certainty, human authority for the Divine command. And not only so; but there is no longer any scope left for "the obedience of faith," which must have an immediate re-

ference to the testimony of God. The knowledge derived from such a source, is a notion, a prejudice; it is not conviction, for it does not rest upon evidence, and it has no relation to the moral character. Thus, in every point of view, the hypothesis of an authorized interpreter of Scripture, or of an “authority in matters of faith,” is subversive of religion. Give up this point to the Romanist, and nothing is left of Protestantism worth contending for. But the Bible, the Bible only is the religion of Protestants.

On the authority to determine things not commanded in Scripture.

§ 5. A fourth method of evading the application of this grand principle of the Reformation—the sufficiency of the Scripture-rule, (the one with which the Nonconformist controvertists have had chiefly to contend,) remains to be examined: the argument is to this effect—That though the Bible is the only unerring standard, as well as the ultimate rule, yet, things left undetermined by Scripture, or things in their own nature indifferent, may be made binding by the authority of the Church; or that, in other words, “the Church hath authority to decree rites and ceremonies.” Upon this plea, submission is demanded to prescribed observances, confessedly resting upon no Scripture foundation. Because they involve nothing contrary to Scripture, therefore, it is argued, they are lawful; and being lawful, they may be de-

creed to be necessary ; and in contesting this point—the lawfulness or expedience of particular observances, (which, had they not been imposed, would long since have ceased to exist except among the forgotten materials of obsolete controversy,) the main argument, which relates to the authority of the imposer, has been too often lost sight of.

The clergymen who, by the Act of Uniformity, were ejected from the Establishment, were naturally led to give prominence to those specific objections which rendered it incompatible with their most sacred obligations to comply with that arbitrary decree ; but nothing can be more erroneous than to represent those objections, however valid, as forming the reasons of Nonconformity. They were only the occasion of leading those excellent men to act up to their principles as Protestants, the operation of the Act of Uniformity being, in this respect, much the same as that of the publication of Indulgences, which led to the Reformation : it did not originate those principles, it only led to their discovery. The ground on which the Nonconformists refused compliance with the prescribed conditions of their retaining their stations in the Establishment, was, their conscientious objections to the things imposed ; but there were reasons against the imposition itself, which lay deeper than those objections. Whether their

scruples were, or were not, intrinsically valid, is of little consequence. Our present business is not to canvass the theological opinions of either party, but to examine the principle on which the whole controversy hinges,—the existence of an authority competent to decree what Scripture has not commanded.

Illogical position, that things indifferent may be made binding.

A preliminary remark is naturally suggested by the illogical character of the position, that because certain things are left indifferent, therefore they may be imposed; because they are not in themselves necessary, therefore the Church may make them necessary! Would it not have been more natural to conclude, that their indifferent nature presents the strongest reason against their being made obligatory? Were they, then, left indifferent on purpose to afford scope for the exercise of human authority? That were to ascribe to the Scripture-rule a designed imperfection, which would leave us in uncertainty whether human authority had yet fulfilled its allotted part in completing the standard of religious duty. If it be necessary to determine certain points relating to religious duty, which Scripture has not determined, then, the Scripture-rule does not supply all the knowledge that is necessary for our guidance; it is not a perfect rule: but, if it be unnecessary to determine them, if they be strictly indifferent, on what pretence can the wanton interference

of arbitrary power in such matters be justified?
 “What charter,” to use the words of Stilling-
 fleet, “hath Christ given the Church, to bind
 “up men more than himself hath done?”* Will

* “He that came to take away the insupportable yoke of
 “Jewish ceremonies, certainly did never intend to gall the
 “necks of his disciples with another instead of it. - The
 “grand commission the Apostles were sent out with, was
 “only to *teach* what Christ had commanded them. Not
 “the least intimation of any power given them to impose or
 “require any thing beyond what himself had spoken to them,
 “or they were directed to by the immediate guidance
 “of the Spirit of God. We never read of the Apostles’
 “making laws but of things supposed necessary. When the
 “council of Apostles met at Jerusalem for deciding a case
 “that disturbed the Church’s peace, we see, they would lay
 “no other burden besides these ‘necessary things,’ (Acts xv.
 “28.) It was not enough with them, that the things would
 “be necessary when they had required them: but they
 “looked on an *antecedent* necessity, either absolute or for
 “the present state, which was the only ground of their im-
 “posing those commands upon the Gentile Christians. There
 “were, after this, great diversities of practice, and varieties of
 “observations among Christians, but the Holy Ghost never
 “thought those things fit to be made matters of law, to which
 “all parties should conform; all that the Apostles required as
 “to these, was mutual forbearance and condescension to-
 “wards each other in them. Without all controversy, the main
 “inlet of all the distractions, confusions, and divisions of the
 “Christian world, hath been by adding other conditions of
 “church-communion than Christ hath done. The unity of
 “the Church is a unity of love and affection, and not a bare
 “uniformity of practice or opinion.”—Bishop STILLING-
 FLEET, *Preface to Irenicum*.

it be said, that though the things imposed naturally admit of the freedom of choice, yet that, respecting them, individual freedom is overruled by the duty of agreement, which requires the sacrifice of private opinion? That duty can respect only the manner of performing what is in some sense necessary to be done: for it cannot be necessary to agree about matters really needless. Besides, so far as agreement respecting things indifferent, is a moral duty, enforced by the desire of avoiding offence, or by a regard to the feelings and interests of others, it obviously supposes a voluntary surrender of individual liberty and inclination, as opposed alike to compulsion or to positive claims: but both the exercise and the moral purpose of the duty of conciliatory agreement are precluded by the interposition of authority, terminating all alternative by an absolute law. "The Apostle, who was strong in the faith," it has been shrewdly remarked, "parted with something of his liberty to please the weak; therefore the weak must part with their consciences, where-
 "in they have no liberty, to gratify the strong!"* Such is the reasoning of those who would exact submission to this Apocryphal authority in matters indifferent.

* *Melius Inquirendum*,
p. 233.

On the term
indifferent.

But the word indifferent, is itself of equivocal import. If by being left indifferent, it is meant simply that the things alluded to, are not the

subject of specific command, or of specific prohibition in the New Testament, there is an obvious fallacy in the application of the term; for, if the spirit of any command extends to their being performed, or to the mode of their performance, then, they are not left indifferent. We may go further and add, that if it is the private conviction of the individual, though that conviction may be erroneous, that they are virtually comprehended in any Apostolic direction, or if it be esteemed only probable that they are virtually commanded or forbidden, to the individual so judging, the matter is not left absolutely indifferent; nor can he be discharged from the higher duty of yielding obedience to the Divine authority on *any* degree of evidence, by the interposition of human authority declaring the matter to be indifferent, and founding on its indifference restrictive or positive enactments. With regard to things confessedly indifferent in themselves, which nevertheless, as respects the conscience of the individual, are not indifferent, we have the decision of an Apostle as to the positive guilt of compliance: "He that doubteth is condemned if he eat." Can then compulsive enactments enforcing obedience in matters held to be doubtful, be clear from the charge of wilfully violating the spirit of the Apostolic law? When compliance is unlawful, can the command be otherwise than unjust? Further,

if the matter be left absolutely indifferent in Scripture, yet, in respect to the *reason* of the thing, it does not appear to the individual to be indifferent; the conscience still claims an immunity from human obligations, as the necessary condition of religious actions; still resents the imposition of an arbitrary standard of such actions, which is not founded upon their intrinsic quality as acceptable or unacceptable to the Great Object of Worship.*

* “ The Pope’s usurpation mainly lies in imposing things
 “ upon men’s consciences as necessary, which are doubtful,
 “ or unlawful; and wherever the same thing is done, there is
 “ an usurpation of the same nature, though not in so high a
 “ degree; and it may be as lawful to withdraw communion
 “ from one as well as the other. If it be said that men are
 “ bound to be ruled by their governors in determining what
 “ things are lawful, and what are not? To this it is an-
 “ swered: first, no true Protestant can swear blind obedience
 “ to Church Governours in all things. IT IS THE HIGHEST
 “ USURPATION TO ROB MEN OF THE LIBERTY OF THEIR
 “ JUDGEMENTS. That which we plead for against the Papists,
 “ is, that all men have eyes in their heads as well as the
 “ Pope; that every one hath a *judicium privatæ discretionis*,
 “ which is the rule of practice, as to himself; and though
 “ we freely allow a *ministerial power*, under Christ, in the
 “ Governours of the Church, yet that extends not to an ob-
 “ ligation upon men, to go against the dictates of their own
 “ reason and conscience. THEIR POWER IS ONLY DIRECT-
 “ IVE AND DECLARATIVE, AND IN MATTERS OF DUTY
 “ CAN BIND NO MORE THAN REASON AND EVIDENCE
 “ BROUGHT FROM SCRIPTURE BY THEM DOTH. A man

Some of the old Nonconformist controvertists have gone the length of denying, that any matters of a religious nature can be considered as indif-

What is not
command-
ed, is for-
bidden.

“ hath not the power over his own understanding, much less
 “ can others have it. *Nullus credit aliquid esse verum, quia*
 “ *vult credere id esse verum; non est enim in potestate homi-*
 “ *nis facere aliquid apparere intellectui suo verum quando*
 “ *voluerit.* (Picus Mirand. Apol.) Either therefore men are
 “ bound to obey Church Governours in all things absolutely,
 “ without any restriction or limitation (which if it be not usurp-
 “ ation and dominion over others’ faith in them, and the worst
 “ of implicit faith in others, it is hard to define what either
 “ of them is,) or else if they be bound to obey only in lawful
 “ things; I then inquire who must be judge what things are
 “ lawful in this case, what not? If the Governours still, then
 “ the power will be absolute again; for to be sure, whatever
 “ they command, they will say is lawful, either in itself, or
 “ as they command it: if every private person must judge
 “ what is lawful, and what is not, which is commanded,
 “ (as when all is said, every man will be his own judge in this
 “ case, in things concerning his own welfare,) then he is no
 “ further bound to obey than he judgeth the thing to be law-
 “ ful which is commanded. The plea of an erroneous con-
 “ science, takes not off the obligation to follow the dictates
 “ of it; for as he is bound to lay it down, supposing it erro-
 “ neous, so he is bound not to go against it, while it is not
 “ laid down. But then again, if men are bound to submit to
 “ Governours in the determination of lawful things, what
 “ plea could our Reformers have to withdraw themselves
 “ from the Pope’s yoke? It might still have held true, *Boves*
 “ *arabant et Asinæ pascebantur simul*, which is *Aquinas’s*
 “ argument for the submission of inferiours in the Church to
 “ their superiours. So that let men turn and wind themselves

† Deut. xii.
32.

ferent, or of a purely negative character. Their favourite position is, Whatsoever is not commanded is forbidden; and those words in Deuteronomy † have been cited as decisive of the truth of this assertion, “What thing soever I
“ command you, observe to do it; thou shalt not
“ add thereto, nor diminish from it.” These sturdy Protestants were too apt to take truth by violence, to seize it in the gross, without being always aware of the logical offences with which they were chargeable in attaining their point, or of the untenable nature of some of the positions they had to make good in their rear. Hooker, who loses no opportunity of availing himself of the weak points in his adversary’s argument, could not fail to perceive, that this unqualified assertion, notwithstanding the seeming countenance of Inspiration, was deficient in accuracy, and might even be turned against the enemy. He knew that a Scripture quotation is not always Scripture authority, and that this text, in its

“ which way they will, by the very same arguments that any
“ will prove separation from the Church of Rome lawful, be-
“ cause she required unlawful things, as conditions of her
“ communion, it will be proved lawful, not to conform to
“ any suspected or unlawful practice, required by any Church
“ Governours upon the same terms; *if the thing so required,*
“ *be, after serious and sober inquiry, judged unwarrantable*
“ *by a man’s own conscience.*” Bp. STILLINGFLEET. *Ireni-*
cum. B. I. Ch. vi. § 6.

literal meaning, were it at all applicable to the matters at issue, would seem equally condemnatory of whatever regulations of order and discipline among themselves, the Nonconformists could not shew to be positive Apostolic institutes. The advocates of ecclesiastical authority have plausibly remarked, that "there is no book of Leviticus in the New Testament:" the circumstantials of religious worship, must, therefore, it is argued, be determined by every church for itself.

The position, however, to which we have adverted, although too sweeping and unqualified, is not fundamentally erroneous. The Nonconformists were not always logically accurate, but they were in general, as in this instance, substantially right. What are the things to which this natural indifference is supposed to attach, whereby they are brought within the range of human authority? They relate to the public order of the Church and the worship of God; matters of faith, it is taken for granted, being allowed on both sides to be determinable only by the Scriptures. The reasonableness of worship, however, consists in its being acceptable to the Divine Being; and the knowledge that it is acceptable, must originate in its being commanded. The Divine command is the only basis of religious duty, and will-worship of

every description, has uniformly drawn down the expression of the Divine displeasure. With regard, then, to whatsoever partakes of the essential nature of worship, it may safely be affirmed, that what is not commanded, is virtually forbidden. This constitutes the broad line of distinction between the worship of faith and the offerings of superstition: the former alone partakes of the character of obedience, being founded upon the knowledge and recognition of the Divine will. "By faith Abel offered
" unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.
" Without faith it is impossible to please
" Him." The offerings of superstition are to an "unknown God," whom ignorantly it worships. As there may, nevertheless, be partial ignorance where there is some certain knowledge, so, there may be blended with true faith, various degrees of superstition; and even in cases in which the ignorance is so gross as to lead to a direct violation of the Divine commandment, there may still exist the living principle which constitutes religious worship acceptable to God. Amid all the darkness of the Romish superstition, doubtless there were thousands, and tens of thousands of the Lord's hidden ones, who had never bowed down to Baal in their hearts. Nevertheless, we have the warrant of Scripture for the conclusion, "that whatsoever is not of

faith," whatsoever consequently has not the Divine command as its basis, is not obedience, but "sin."

As respects that in which religious worship consists, nothing, then, is left for man to institute; but since to every external duty attach some necessary circumstances of performance, and in order to the performance of social actions, the public determination of those circumstances is previously necessary, it has been contended, that the circumstantials of religious worship, being left indefinite by the Scriptures, fall within the province of human authority. Here the axiom, that what is not commanded is forbidden, does not seem to bear upon the point at issue.

§ 6. But what is meant by circumstantials, in reference to religious actions? The natural circumstances which inseparably adhere to all actions, whether sacred or civil, are those of *time*, *place*, *agent*, and *means* of performance. Now, of these, (all being equally necessary) some, it is evident, are left indifferent in Scripture, and others are not. With regard to the circumstance of *time*, God has commanded us to keep one day in seven holy unto Himself, and the first day of the week is regarded by Christians as "The Lord's Day:" this is a circumstance of religious actions which is not left indifferent. Under the Jewish dispensation, the circumstance of

On the circumstances of religious actions.

place, was not less absolutely determined by the specific limitation of positive precept, as indeed were all the circumstantials of the Jewish ritual. When the circumstances of a religious action are specified in the Divine precept, they form an essential part of what is instituted: what would be termed its natural circumstances, then acquire the character of religious circumstances, and are designated as *holy* day, *holy* place, and sacred office. Now, since that which determines the religious character of any circumstances, is the Divine precept constituting them an essential part of the ordained duty, it may be safely inferred, that circumstances undetermined by Scripture, are not susceptible of this sacred character; for He who is the Sovereign Institutor of worship, is alone competent to ordain what shall form the essential conditions of its being acceptable in his sight. Human limitations which presume to determine on any circumstances as possessing this virtue or sacredness, directly interfere with the Divine prerogative. To no *religious* circumstances of Divine worship, therefore, can indifference attach; they cannot rest upon the will of man: the Bible, the Bible only is the religion of Christians.

On the natural circumstances of religious actions.

The circumstances of religious actions not determined by Scripture, must be either such as are simply necessary to their being performed, or necessary, in the opinion of those who

prescribe them, to their being worthily and fitly performed. With regard to the former, that is to say, the circumstances which by simple necessity adhere to such actions, all persons upon whom devolve the obligations of religious duty, must be left at liberty to avail themselves of any of the natural means of discharging them, among which means must certainly be placed these co-necessary adjuncts, and they may be considered, therefore, as virtually included in the command. That human authority, which has no power to determine religious duty itself, should yet claim to prescribe the circumstances under which exclusively it shall be performed, is a strange and unwarrantable presumption. In the limitation thus imposed, it is manifest that the *means* of performance are infringed upon. For instance, it is the duty of Christians to assemble together as a church of Christ, at stated seasons, for the purposes of Divine worship and religious edification; and it is necessary that some particular time and place should be agreed upon as the circumstances of their so assembling: as the act itself, like every other act of religious obedience, must be voluntary, it is necessary that the circumstances of time and place, so far as they are undetermined by Scripture, should be fixed upon by common consent: the duty of determining those requisite circumstances, involves the right to determine

them; both the duty and the right, therefore, must belong to those upon whom is laid the obligation of the Divine command. In point of fact, as general expedience is the only reason by which the determination can be regulated, no difficulty is likely to arise in fixing upon every necessary circumstance in order to religious communion. But now, should human authority undertake to enact, that inasmuch as the Scriptures have left it indifferent at what hour of the Lord's day, and in what places, Christians shall assemble, therefore it shall be lawful for them to meet only between certain specified hours and within certain circumscribed localities; would it not be the effect of this enactment, not simply to restrain the natural liberty of moral actions, but to lessen the facility—in some cases to interfere with the opportunity of performing the duty at all? For since the Divine command is equally fulfilled, at whatsoever hour or place persons may assemble for the purpose, any imposed limitations must be regarded as actually abridging the means of obedience. No necessary circumstances of any religious duty can be considered as left absolutely indifferent, for all are permissively comprehended in the precept which renders some circumstances necessary. To decree that, because all means are indifferently commanded, and some means are necessary, certain means only shall be held lawful,

is a wanton infringement upon the liberty of the moral agent, who, as being alone responsible for the action with all its circumstances, has the exclusive right of determining for himself how it may best be performed.

It is not, however, in reference to the *natural* circumstances of religious actions, those which are intrinsically necessary, that this authority to determine things indifferent is pretended to, so much as to such adventitious circumstances as are deemed conducive to the more decorous and orderly performance of religious actions. And now the term *circumstance* will be found to undergo a portentous transformation. This wooden engine proves to contain within itself a hostile army. What may not by this artifice be smuggled into the Christian Church? Rites are circumstances, ceremonies are circumstances, circumstances fitting and decent in order to the due celebration of Divine worship. The cross in baptism, is a circumstance; so are the spittle, and the oil, and the salt, circumstances; such is the use of the crucifix itself. The consecration of churches, is a circumstance; so is the consecration of water, of vestments, and of images. The Prayer-book and the Mass-book are alike circumstances, and so are all the mummeries of Rome. Who then is to decide what rites are only decent and what are superstitious; what may be considered as virtually com-

On adventitious circumstances.

manded, and what as virtually forbidden? Are all circumstances alike indifferent, of which Scripture does not contain an express prohibition? If so, the Church hath, it should seem, authority to decree all alike to be expedient and binding; and if any Church may claim this authority, doubtless it belongs to the Church of Rome. With what grace or consistency, then, can Protestants acknowledging such an authority, charge the *parent* Church with unscriptural innovation, because she has availed herself of this same “power to decree rites and ceremonies,” with what they presume to deem indiscreet freedom or bad taste? If, however, these circumstances are not all alike indifferent, the proof that they are not so, must be ultimately deducible from the sacred Scriptures, notwithstanding that they appear to maintain a silence respecting them, which apparent silence is construed into a tacit permission given to the Church to determine them by authority.

The proposition, that every thing relating to the worship of God, which is not commanded, is forbidden, presents after all, when rightly understood, the only satisfactory conclusion on which we can rest. As those co-necessary natural circumstances which adhere to every action, are virtually comprehended in the precept which is the basis of the instituted duty, so, whatsoever circumstances, considered strictly

as means of discharging what is positively enjoined, conduce to the more decent and impressive performance of the duty, are strictly consonant with the Divine command ; are permissively although not specifically involved in it. On the contrary, whatsoever does not partake of the strictly subordinate character of means, or, if the term may be allowed, does not come under the description of *modal circumstances* of obedience,—whatsoever is added as a moral or religious circumstance with the view of constituting the action either more efficient, or more acceptable to the Lord of worship, is to be condemned as superstition ; it being that sort of addition to the commandments of God, which is expressly forbidden. The application of this axiom may, like that of every general principle, be a matter of some delicacy ; for this very reason, the decision must ultimately be left with conscience ; but thus much there is no room for hesitation in affirming, that all symbolical or ceremonial worship, not expressly instituted by God himself, borders upon modal idolatry. These form a part of worship, therefore, they are worship, and worship uncommanded is forbidden,—the analogy warrants the use of the metaphor,—it is *strange fire*. The ritual consecration of places and things, is clearly no part of the circumstantials of obedience ; it has no relation to any positive commandment, and must

be classed with those palpable corruptions of Christianity by human invention, which the Scriptures pointedly condemn. "It is not in the power of man," it has been well remarked, "to determine of any such religious or holy place, because he can make none so."* Here Protestants are called upon to make a stand, and to reiterate the famous declaration of Chillingworth in terms somewhat modified: the New Testament, the New Testament only is the religion of Christians. The relative holiness of any time, or place, or thing, is a religious circumstance which can originate in nothing short of the positive ordinance of God. True it is, that "there is no book of Leviticus in the New Testament," for *there is nothing Levitical in Christianity*. Such things are not left indifferent; they are strictly analogous to those Judaical superstitions which the Apostle Paul combats in his Epistles, with all the force of inspired authority. As to many of them, their origin is by no means unequivocal. Christian Rome adopted them from Pagan Rome,

* "Though we acknowledge God to be in every thing, yet so to worship him in any thing as if his essential presence were confined thereto, while it ought to be conceived of as immense, this is idolatry: and therefore they who so conceive it as confined, (or tied in respects *wherein he hath not so tied it himself*,) are concerned to beware of running upon this rock." HOWE'S *Works*, Vol. i. p. 254.

grafting the religion of temples on the religion of churches,—thus producing the religion of cathedrals,—a religion of sacrifices, and altars, and vestments, and priests, and holy days, and holy ground. Protestant Episcopacy has unwittingly imported some of these Pagan antiquities, and having given them Christian baptism, would fain pass them off as decorous and edifying solemnities. But “what saith the Scripture?”

Jesus Christ instituted two mystical ceremonies in his Church, and only two: Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. These exclusively are by Protestants termed *Sacraments*. The Church of Rome contends for *seven* sacraments; yet many of her learned writers frankly confess, that five of these are but mystical ceremonies resting upon ecclesiastical tradition. And what less is Confirmation in the English Church? The unction is now disused; but as an outward symbol of spiritual grace given unto us, it answers to the received definition of a Sacrament.*

* The design of this rite, may be learned from the Rubric contained in all the Common-Prayer Books before the last Review, which declares “That forasmuch as Confirmation is ministered to them that be baptized, that by imposition of hands and prayer they may receive strength and defence against all temptations to sin, and the assaults of the world and the devil; it is most meet to be ministered when children come to that age, that partly by the frailty of their own flesh, partly by the assaults of the world and

Besides, wherein consists the nice distinction between the authority to decree rites and ce-

“ the devil, they begin to be in danger to fall into sundry
 “ kinds of sin.” The Collect contains the petition, “ That
 “ God *who had vouchsafed to regenerate* the persons who now
 “ come to be confirmed, by *Water and the Holy Ghost, and*
 “ *had given unto them forgiveness of all their sins, would*
 “ *now strengthen them with the Holy Ghost the Comforter,*
 “ *and daily increase in them the gifts of grace, viz.:* The seven-
 “ fold gifts of the Holy Spirit.” “ The Fathers every where,”
 says Hooker, “ impute to it that gift or grace of the Holy
 “ Ghost, *not which maketh us first Christian men, but, when*
 “ *we are made such, assisteth us in all virtue, armeth us*
 “ *against temptation and sin.*” The honour of administer-
 ing Confirmation, we are told by Wheatley, is restricted to
 the Bishops, as their “ peculiar and incommunicable prero-
 “ gative:” “ as they have the sole honour, so they have also
 “ the whole charge of this institution. It must be wholly
 “ omitted, if they do not perform it.” “ But though the lay-
 “ ing on of hands,” continues this learned expositor of the
 Book of Common Prayer, “ is a token that the Bishops act in
 “ this office *by Divine authority*; yet at the same time they
 “ sue to heaven for the *blessing they bestow*, in humble ac-
 “ knowledgment that the PRECIOUS GIFTS HEREBY CON-
 “ FERRED are not the effect of their own power and holiness,
 “ but of the abundant mercy and favour of him, who is the
 “ only fountain of all goodness and grace!!”

The illustration of this rite, as practised in the English Church, is of the more importance, as it serves to throw considerable light on the disputed import of her other ordinances. If Confirmation be a means of conferring the Holy Spirit, surely it is not incredible that she should also teach that Baptism conveys Regeneration. Let us abide by old Hook-

remonies, and the power to make Sacraments, that so insignificant a stretch of prerogative on the part of the infallible pontiff, as is involved in the latter, should be deemed a ground for complaint, while the former is allowed to be legitimate by Protestant Episcopacy itself? But neither rites nor ceremonies, can, by any authority or decree, save that of our Lord Jesus Christ, be constituted significant modes of Divine worship; all discussion of the question—To whom should be committed such an authority, is thus rendered superfluous: the observances imposed, being in themselves positively unscriptural, the principle of the imposition cannot be otherwise than erroneous.

In conclusion: As to any circumstances of religious actions, which, although not simply necessary in order to reduce the ordinances of Christ into act and exercise, are yet susceptible of vindication, as conducive to their being more fitly performed, “it is no great matter,” shrewdly remarks a writer of the last century, “who determines them, if they have but power, and

er's axiom, which he introduces in answer to some of the specious pleas of the Romanists: “In actions of this kind, “we are more to respect what the greatest part of men is “commonly prone to conceive, than what some few men's “wits may devise in construction of their own particular “meaning.

“abuse not that power.” But the duty of determining, relative to these more artificial circumstances, not less than, as has been argued, with regard to circumstances essentially necessary, devolves upon those who are alone responsible for the performance of the action itself. Human authority, if interposed to limit the freedom of this determination, embarrasses the right and abridges the means of discharging the obligations of duty, under any circumstances that reason and convenience may dictate. Such is the nature of religious duty, that the utmost freedom in discharging its obligations by all means, is an unalienable right; the generally acknowledged superiority of any particular mode of conducting religious worship, would form no reason at all that it should be authoritatively imposed, seeing that no possible mode can be by man legitimately forbidden.

As to the necessity that every voluntary society should come to an agreement in determining upon some circumstances, this neither implies nor involves the least restriction of the natural liberty of the individuals composing such a society; whereas, the imperative predetermination of such circumstances by foreign authority,—the authority, for example, of the civil magistrate, as in the English Establishment,—is a direct violation of the rights attaching to the church as a voluntary association, as well as an infringe-

ment upon the rights of individual conscience, in reference to the discharge of obligations simply religious. From so undue an exercise of human authority in matters with which it has no legitimate concern,—from the imposition of other rules than those which are the basis and standard of religious duty, the appeal lies to the sacred Scriptures, and by that safe and only rule we abide. Or, as Luther appealed “from the Pope ill-informed, to the Pope when he should receive more full information;” so, Nonconformists may be allowed to appeal from Human Authority decreeing rites and ceremonies, to Human Authority better instructed concerning the rights of conscience and the true nature of religion itself. In matters of religion, we acknowledge no master but Christ, no bonds of conscience but his laws, no dominion over our faith but his revealed will; and, therefore, the Scriptures being in this also our authority, we cannot but “render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s, and unto God,” and unto Him alone, “the things which are God’s.”

CHAP. II.

On the Nature of Public Ordinances.

True cause
of the con-
troversy re-
specting
THE RULE.

§ 1. **I**T was, indeed, an achievement well worthy of all the energies which it called forth, and of all the labours and sufferings which it cost, to break the seals which the presumptuous wickedness of man had put upon the Divine records, to display again to the world the inspired volume in all its sufficiency, and to re-establish its authority as the sole standard of religious truth. But how came a point so essentially connected with the evidence of Christianity, to be involved in obscurity? The authenticity of what purports to be Divine Revelation being admitted, how could its sufficiency become a question? Is it not obvious, that within a society which had preserved a conformity to the directions of the Inspired standard, no such doubt could have originated? No occasion for the invention of other rules, could ever have perplexed a Church adhering to the simple purpose of Scriptural institutions. Errors in the creed have usually their source in corrupt practice. When, therefore, purposes

not contemplated by the founders of the Christian Church, came to occupy the minds of men who styled themselves successors of the Apostles, the insufficiency of the sacred Scriptures, as an authority for the inventions of human policy, could not but be manifest. "We do not think that in them," as Hooker says, "God hath omitted any thing needful unto His purpose;" but the purposes of man are widely different, and these they are not adapted to subserve. This essential difference lies at the foundation of the present controversy. Between those who admit, and those who deny the absolute sufficiency of the Scripture-rule, there will be found to exist, as the true cause of this opposition of sentiment, a total contrariety of views and habits of feeling respecting the whole range of subjects to which the standard of faith and practice is designed to apply. Thus, with regard to the public ordinances of Christian worship, it will be found, that the point at issue, is not simply whether the Scriptures are a sufficient and exclusive rule of duty, but what is the nature of those religious services which constitute the matter of the duties to be regulated. "It was a true observation of a learned person, that leave Englishmen to their English Bibles, and there will a new offspring arise in every age, that will have the same

* *Melius In-
quirendum.*

“ apprehensions about these matters, that Non-
conformists now have.”*

The notions entertained by the Papists respecting the Sacraments, as of inherent efficacy, are universally deemed by Protestants, a gross and pernicious error; yet they form, in truth, but one feature in a consistent system of error, which has necessitated the plea of Tradition in its defence. What, according to the Romish theology, is Prayer? The reiteration of an unmeaning form to ideal mediators, by which, as by a penance, the slaves of that dreadful superstition are taught to believe that they may propitiate the Deity! And, according to what the Church assures them, there is scarcely any thing which prayers such as these cannot effect. They are the conditions of Indulgences to the living, and the means of salvation to the dead; they shorten the road through Purgatory, and open the gates of Paradise. With scarcely more brutal ignorance do the idolatrous tribes of Tartars, visited by modern travellers,* revolve in their *prayer-mills* their scraps of devotion, with the view of lightening their conscience at less expense of time and of labour than is required by oral recitation: so abject is the depth of degradation to which a religion must stoop, which should seek to accommodate itself to the grossest conceptions of the human mind!

* V. KLAP-
ROTH's Tra-
vels. 1814.

Of all kinds of labour, that species of intellectual exertion which has to do with the obligations of religious duty, is to a carnal mind the most irksome; there is none which men shew so constant a propensity to devolve upon others, content to barter their moral freedom for the privilege of thinking and praying, repenting and believing, by proxy. Whether it be by means of the priest or of the prayer-mill, the degree only of stupidity is different; the motive and intention are the same. The Romish Church, by conducting its public services in a language unknown to the common people, did its utmost to encourage this propensity, availing herself of it to hold them in miserable bondage to the priests their mediators, by whom, regenerated, confirmed in grace, and absolved from all transgression, they were to be put in possession of the stipulated salvation.

Notions scarcely less intelligent than these have, however, been found to consist with a Protestant creed. There are thousands in this country, who attach to the public services of the Church, as performed by the Established Clergy, a mysterious efficiency not easily to be distinguished from that which the Romish Church holds to belong, *ex opere operato*, to the due administration of the Sacraments. Not only is Baptism identified with spiritual regeneration, and represented as "the only regeneration

“possible in this life,” but all the ordinances of religion are considered as a species of propitiatory service deriving its efficacy from the legitimate appointment of the officiating minister, rather than from its being the common act of the people.* Thus, in the English Book of Common

* It would be easy to multiply proofs of this statement, by extracts from almost any of what are termed the High-Church writers. The impious extravagance of an assertion of LAW, has already been adverted to. (Vide p. 207. *Note*.) The following passage from the so highly-lauded “Essay on the Church,” by Jones of Nayland, having been recently quoted with unqualified approbation, may be given as a fair specimen of the notions adverted to. “With those who are ignorant, and ill-instructed in the nature and use of a Church, there is a perverse prejudice in favour of preaching; and, consequently, a shocking neglect of those duties which belong to the people. It is a fine easy way for people, with itching ears, to hear a preacher talk them into heaven, while they neglect all the *more essential parts* of Divine worship. There is a fashion of inviting people to *come to Christ*, without telling them *where* and *how* he is to be found. Besides, it is a great mistake to suppose that the whole of religion consists in our taking of Christ; it is beginning at the wrong end, for Christ is to take us, as he took little children in his arms, and gave them his blessing. He said to his Disciples, *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you*. There is a covenant between us and God, into which God, of his infinite grace, takes us: we do not take him, neither can we; and this confines us to the ordinances of the Church, which are not of us, but are the gifts of God’s free grace to us miserable sinners; and Christians are united to God, and to one another, by the services of prayer, and

Prayer, the minister is still designated as *the Priest*, and nothing is more common than to hear people speak of Christian temples, and of Christian altars. Were such phrases purely unmeaning, they might be suffered to escape condemnation as the language of metaphor; but they are not of this negative character. They lead people to regard what is termed Divine Service, as a celebration upon which they are called to attend, but which it is the part of another to perform for them, they being only the auditory; for indeed the generally accepted phrase, to read prayers, or to preach *before* such and such noble or right honourable personages, warrants this conclusion. Long before phrases of this kind could have passed into familiar use, false notions of the things themselves to which they relate, must have become prevalent; notions which are to be traced either to some errors in the received system of ecclesiastical theology, or to some defect in the scheme of public instruction.

“ the participation of the Sacraments, more than by hearing
“ the word of God without them; which many hear for
“ reasons of vanity and uncharitableness. Who are the best
“ friends every minister hath in his parish? *They who at-*
“ *tend the Prayers and Sacraments with him*; who are edi-
“ fied by his *Priesthood*, as well as by his *preaching*, and
“ are active in the great work of their own salvation.”

Nature of
Prayer.

§ 2. To begin with the subject of Public Prayer. Whatever prayer is in its own nature, whether considered as a duty or as a means, that it must assuredly continue to be, under every modification of its exercise. If, as a private duty, prayer consists in a purely spiritual exercise of mind, directly terminating upon the great Object of faith and adoration, the whole value of which depends upon its being the sincere expression of pious dispositions and desires, its efficacy, on its being the instrument of faith, such must also be its nature, and the conditions of its acceptableness, as the social duty of believers. If, in the one case, it is a personal act, an act which cannot be performed for us by another, in such a sense as to discharge us from the obligation of the duty, or to ensure to us its beneficial influence as a means, the same must it be in the other case, as a public service: one cannot pray in the stead of others. It is the office of the minister to guide the feelings of the assembly into the proper channel, to suggest the appropriate expressions of devout thought, and, so far as he can, to impart to their minds the sacred impulse which ought to give life to his prayers; but it rests with them conjointly to perform the social service, by individually taking up the petitions as their own. Social prayer is not the act of one for many, but the joint act of many with one. This has

been admitted by some of the ablest advocates of liturgies. Dr. Paley gives it as a reason for deeming the liturgical mode preferable to extemporaneous services, that the people must otherwise be “merely hearers.” The fallacy of this argument does not lessen the importance of the admission on which it is founded: the principle now to be established, relates to the nature, not to the mode of social prayer.

There is, it is true, one branch of this Christian duty, which we are bound to perform for one another, and which we are encouraged to believe may become instrumental, through our faith, to the essential advantage of those for whom we pray. If even an Apostle could say to the subjects of his ministry, “Brethren, pray “for us;”^{*} if he could ascribe to their intercessions on his behalf, his deliverance from severe trials,[†] and express a confident hope that through the same means he should be “restored “to them the sooner;” we may certainly conclude that it forms part of the plan of the Divine economy, that this mutual duty should be, not indeed a meritorious cause, but a means conditional of mutual good. It may be difficult to understand how the prayers of another on our behalf, should place us in a condition to receive temporal, and even spiritual benefits; but such we know to be, quite irrespectively of any merit in the suppliant, the law of the Di-

Interces-
sion.

^{*} 1 Thess. v.
25.

² Thess. iii.
2.

[†] Phil. i. 19.
Heb. xiii.
18.

* "He shall
"ask and he
"shall give
"him life."
1 John v. 16.

vine promises in regard to the prayer of faith.*

It is equally clear, that the character of an *authorized* intercessor, cannot be claimed by any minister of the Church of Christ. The Apostle knew, when with humility he solicited the prayers of his spiritual children, that they would be not less effectual than his own on their behalf; that the duty was mutual, arising from their common need; and that there is but "One Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus," the only "High Priest of our profession." The notion of official intercessors, is decidedly antichristian.* Prayer, even public prayer, is not a function attached to office, or requiring in him who offers it, the pos-

* Mr. LAW affirms, in his Second Letter to the Bishop of BANGOR, "that when the Bishop or Priest intercedes for the congregation, and pronounces the Apostolical benedictions upon them, this is not barely an act of charity and humanity of one Christian praying for another, but is the work of a person commissioned by God to bless in his name, and be effectually ministerial in the conveying of his graces." "Have we so lost all memory of Popery," exclaims Bishop BURNET, after quoting this and similar assertions, "that we cannot see from what all the wealth and dominion of the clergy arose? What was it, but these doctrines; that their intervention was necessary to mens salvation, that their benedictions and absolutions, were the keys of the kingdom of Heaven; that by them they could open or shut, bind or loose, as seemed good in their eyes; and that all their resolutions and decrees were ratified above?" BURNET on *Church Authority*, p. 126.

session of authority. Whatsoever regulations may be deemed expedient for the sake of order, no individual in a Christian society, can be, more than any other member of the congregation authorized to pray for the rest; nor can the prayers of one man, whatever be his station or office, be on that account more than those of another, effectual or prevailing. The prayers of the church, to which we are taught in the sacred writings, to ascribe so mighty an energy, are not the vicarious intercessions of a priest, but the fervent combination of holy feelings in those who, having drunk into one spirit, are of one mind in the Lord. Public Prayer, therefore, can be, as such, acceptable or efficacious for its designed purpose, only so far as it is really the act of an assembly of spiritual worshippers. "God is a spirit;" and the deep-felt recognition of this truth, is essential to any worship that can be in his sight acceptable, as a reasonable service.

§ 3. One might have imagined that considerations like these, would have precluded any controversy about the mere mode of conducting social worship. Whether the phraseology of the public prayers should be determined by written forms, or left to the discretion of the officiating minister, whether the service should be wholly or only partly liturgical, whether it should consist of one continuous strain of pray-

On Forms of
Prayer.

er, or of a succession of shorter prayers, broken by responses and recitations, are surely matters of very minor importance, seeing that the efficacy of prayer is in no wise connected with them. In the Episcopal Church of England, these are not, however, esteemed matters of indifference. Not satisfied with giving an allowable preference to the liturgical mode, its advocates go the length of contending for the exclusive propriety,—nay, Divine authority, of pre-composed forms of devotion. Free prayer is represented as indecorous, ridiculous, fanatical;* and the religious services of the Dissenters, which are conducted in this mode, are contemned and misrepresented with all the intolerance of prejudice. It is not easy to account for the extreme degree to which this antipathy has been carried. By some persons, common prayer has seemed to be regarded as so absolutely synonymous with a common form of prayer, that it could be conducted by no other means than a book and a reader. An Episcopal clergyman who should, in the reading-desk, deviate in the slightest respect from the language of the prescribed formulary, would be liable to

* Bishop BULL, in his “Primitive Christianity,” ventures to give as his opinion, that from the extemporary prayers of the Dissenters from the Liturgy, as one main cause, first proceeded that irreligion and atheism which had since overspread the nation!!

the severest ecclesiastical censure; and though he is at liberty to indulge himself in the pulpit, in the use of his own expressions, yet, even there, extemporaneous prayer, if it exceed a few sentences, is almost universally stigmatized as pharisaical, or objected to as a tacit depreciation of the perfection of the Liturgy. Forms are represented as “necessary,” and forms only are held to be allowable. Let us examine the arguments which are brought in support of this opinion.

[1.] One of the most common, and yet perhaps it is the weakest of the arguments in favour of liturgical forms, is founded upon what is improperly denominated **THE LORD’S PRAYER**. Because our Lord gave a form of prayer to his disciples, forms of prayer, it is contended, are alone adapted to the public services of the Church, “As if,” says Hooker, “our Lord, “even of purpose to prevent this fancy of “extemporal and voluntary prayers, had not “left us of his own framing one which might “both remain as a part of the Church liturgy, “and serve as a pattern whereby to frame all “other prayers with efficacy, yet without “superfluity of words.” To either branch of this assertion are opposed the following considerations.

Argument
from the
Lord’s
Prayer.

B. v. § 26.

First, It is readily admitted by the advocates of Liturgies, that, as has been established by

Lightfoot, and other learned commentators, this formula was not, strictly speaking, composed by our Lord himself. “It is very observable,” says Bishop Bull, “that the Lord Christ himself, when he recommended to his disciples, upon their desire, a prayer to be used by them, (that which we call our Lord’s Prayer,) he did not frame an entirely new prayer, in words of his own conception, but took out of the ancient euchologies or prayer-books of the Jews, what was good and laudable in them, and out of them composed that prayer. The very preface of our Lord’s Prayer, *Our Father which art in Heaven*, was the usual preface of the Jewish prayers. And all the following petitions* are to be found almost in the very same words in their prayer-books.” How, then, can it be with propriety affirmed, that our Lord gave his disciples a *form* of prayer at all? It is evident from the text, that the design of his directions, related to a far more extensive and unrestricted exercise of the duty of prayer, and that it had

* “*Primitive Christianity*,” Sermon xiii. So Dr. COMBER also, in his “*Origin of Liturgies*,” tells us, that our Saviour was “*so afraid of innovation*, as to take every sentence of his prayer out of the Jewish forms then in use.” And Grotius himself is guilty of the same puerility: “So far,” he remarks, “was the Lord himself of the Christian Church from all affectation of unnecessary novelty!”

more especial reference to the secret devotions of the closet. St. Luke states, that “one of the disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.” Our Lord so far complies with this request, as to give them in a few simple sententious petitions, a specimen of that spiritual style of supplication, which, in opposition to the “vain repetitions” of the heathen, and the heartless parade of the pharisee, is alone acceptable to Him who seeth in secret; and he then immediately passes on to enforce a holy importunity and earnestness in asking for spiritual blessings, which shews that he did not design to reprehend the mere length of the prayers of the Pharisee, apart from their ostentatious publicity, much less to circumscribe the devotions of his disciples within the narrow compass of a form.

The words which introduced the formula in St Matthew's Gospel, are, “After this manner, therefore, pray ye;” and it is remarkable, that in the copies preserved by the two Evangelists, there is a material variation. The words *debts* and *trespasses*, are, it is true, said to be the same in the Syriac; but in the fourth petition, there is an undeniable difference of phraseology, which, although of no importance in itself, is sufficient to expose the futility of the reasonings in support of the obligation of adhering to

the exact words. But this is not all; the doxology is omitted by St. Luke, in whose Gospel our Saviour's words seem more express for the use of the prayer, while the Evangelist Mark omits the formula altogether, but records, evidently in reference to the same occasion, an exhortation corresponding to one of the petitions of which it consists: "When ye stand, praying, forgive if ye have ought against any, that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." Very different was the design of our blessed Lord from that of teaching his disciples to pray in the words of a form: the whole force of the passage is destroyed, if we do not consider it as rather inculcating the spirit of contentment and meekness in which they were to present these their accustomed petitions, and as affording them a lesson with regard to the few and simple matters to which they ought to confine their care and their requests.

Secondly, It is observable, that in the conversation which arose from the request of the disciples, our Lord expressly enjoins upon them to address to the Father, petitions which are not comprehended in this formula, and of which no forms are subjoined. The condition and the promise, "Ask and ye shall receive," refer immediately to the readiness of our heavenly Father to "give the Holy Spirit to them

“who ask it.” Surely, this petition is not of less importance than any one of those which are comprised in “the Lord’s Prayer,” and would not have been omitted had that been intended to serve as a perfect model. To those who attach so much importance to forms, this circumstance must, one would think, appear inexplicable. But on the supposition that our Lord, in referring his disciples to the Jewish prayer-books for specimens of simple and compendious forms of appropriate supplication, had no intention to prescribe an exact model of prayer, or to lay upon them the obligation of adhering to a form of words, it is easy to account for any seeming omission: no petition specifically relating to the gift of the Holy Spirit, was, it is probable, in common use in the Jewish Church, and the formula being altogether of a Jewish character, would therefore contain no reference to the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. On this account, it cannot be regarded as an instituted standard or pattern of acceptable prayer, except so far as regards in general the things for which we ought to pray.

Thirdly, That the use of this formula was not designed to be perpetually binding on the disciples, is rendered still more probable by what may be considered as amounting to a virtual repeal of any previous directions on the subject. “Hitherto,” said our Lord in his last

interview with the disciples previous to his suffering, "ye have asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." Can we imagine otherwise than that the character of their prayers, would henceforth undergo an important change, in correspondence to the new economy upon which they were then about to enter? Hitherto they had entertained but very obscure notions of the nature of the Mediatorial dispensation, and of the work which their Lord and Master came to fulfil. As yet, that Holy Spirit who was to guide them into all truth, and to shew them the things of Christ, had not fallen upon them. They were not as yet endued with "the spirit of prayer and supplication," and weak and wavering was their faith. A form of prayer which might have been perfectly suitable to their character as disciples, while their Master was yet with them, and they were still "under the law," could not be equally appropriate, as the expression of their faith, under the new views and clearer discoveries which burst upon them after his ascension to the Father.* It was then,

* What shall we say, then, to the following assertion from a Christian bishop? "Many of those forms (used by the Jews) are very good and excellent, and have no other fault to be found in them, but that they do not *end as the prayers of us Christians do*, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Bishop BULL'S *Primitive Christianity*, Sermon xiii.

and not till then, that they acquired “boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,” by the new and living way which he had consecrated ; and that having him for their High Priest above, whom they had known as their Divine Friend and Master while on earth, they drew near “in the full assurance of faith.” The petitions of the formula which was given under circumstances so widely different, are, it may be admitted, generally suitable to every Christian at every stage of his spiritual progress ; but they do not correspond to the distinguishing character of the Gospel dispensation ; they do not breathe the peculiar spirit of that faith which pleads the name of Christ in suing for pardon and acceptance, and which in him, though unseen, as the object of sacred affection, rejoices with joy unspeakable.

Fourthly, It is in the highest degree improbable, that this formula, had it been designed for the perpetual use of the Church of Christ, should not, in any one instance, have been subsequently introduced or adverted to throughout the New Testament. The Acts and the Epistles present to us several specimens of prayer, and the latter abound with earnest and reiterated exhortations to “pray without ceasing,” to “pray with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit,” and “in every thing to make known our requests to God ;” but never does a hint

occur as to the use of any formula, much less as to the obligation of an adherence to prescribed forms: on the contrary, the general exhortations above referred to, would seem incompatible with such a restriction. The prayers of the Church, on every occasion on record in the sacred history, were unpremeditated; that they ever assumed a liturgical form, is a notion which can derive no support from the New Testament. At all events, no such forms have descended to us, whence we may certainly conclude that none can have any claim to be received as the law and standard of our devotions. Allowing the utmost possible force to the argument drawn from our Lord's prayer, as a precedent for the use of forms, the *imposition* of public forms admits of no justification from their acknowledged lawfulness or propriety; and the assertion would still remain to be proved, that our Lord had any design to repress "the fancy" of extemporal prayers." Yet, such a delusion does prejudice throw over the judgment, that on the solitary circumstance of this short formula being given to the disciples, unsupported by any Scriptural precept or example in favour of the practice of this mode of prayer, has been built the lofty hypothesis of the Divine origin and necessity of human prescribed forms, as the only allowable mode of conducting the public services of the Church! The Lord's

prayer is actually assumed as plea sufficient for a liturgy!

[2.] A second argument in favour of the use of precomposed forms, is founded on the supposed difficulty of conducting extemporary or free prayer in a decorous and unobjectionable manner. It is adduced by Dr. Paley, as one chief advantage of a liturgy, “that it prevents
“absurd, extravagant, or impious addresses
“to God, which in an order of men so numerous as *the sacerdotal*, the folly and enthusiasm of many must always be in danger of
“producing, where the conduct of the public
“worship is intrusted, without restraint or assistance, to the discretion and abilities of the
“officiating minister.”* But is it not very remarkable, that this opinion, as to the necessity of liturgical forms, should be maintained almost exclusively by members of the English Establishment? Is it not strange, that out of the pale of Episcopacy no such necessity should, among Protestants, be found to exist? Are the other reformed churches, who, equally with the Eng-

Argument from difficulty of conducting free prayer.

* “*Moral Philosophy.*” B. v. C. 5. Bishop BULL has the same argument. “Secondly, set and prescribed forms of
“prayer are necessary in the public worship of God, that
“*ministers less learned* may have provision of devotions
“*made for them.* It is a truth not to be dissembled, the
“less learned have been, and I fear always will be, the greater
“number.” *Primitive Christianity*, Ser. xiii.

lish Dissenters, discard the use of liturgies, all guilty of misconducting the order of public worship? Is the service of the Episcopal Church alone decorous and acceptable? Who then is to be the arbiter? Hooker, with less calmness of temper, and less propriety of language than he usually preserves, thus attempts to combat by witless sarcasms the arguments of those who resisted the imposition of the Prayer-book. "If prayers were no otherwise accepted of God than being conceived always new, according to the exigence of present occasions: if it be right to judge him by our own bellies, and to imagine that he doth loath to have the self-same supplications often intreated, even as we do to be every day fed without alteration or change of diet; if prayers be actions which ought to waste away themselves in the making; we cannot excuse Moses, who gave such occasion of scandal to the world!" But was it ever contended that prayers were more acceptable to God, on account of their being extemporary? Was ever novelty of expression represented as an excellence in public addresses to the great Object of worship? The notion that either the efficacy or the acceptableness of our prayers, depends in any respect upon the selection of the language, or the qualities of the composition, is an absurdity originating entirely with the advocates

for forms. Nor were it more superstitious to entertain even the grossly ridiculous persuasion which Hooker satirizes, than it is to imagine that the acknowledged beauty or excellence of any human compositions, constitutes them more pleasing to the Almighty, than the most homely effusions of a devout and fervent mind.

The supposed difficulty of conducting the public services of the Church in a decorous manner, is, after all, far from being remedied by the expedient of a Prayer-book, for it is in the power of an incompetent or careless reader, to render the finest compositions far less impressive than the most inartificial oral language; in this respect the extemporaneous services of the Dissenters, with all their alleged imperfections, may safely bear comparison with the usual performances of the reading-desk. It cannot be, however, for a moment admitted, either that extemporary public prayer is really in itself a matter of so much difficulty as to afford an argument in favour of the use of liturgies, or that the practice of it presents any ground for the apprehensions expressed by the advocates of forms, as to its possible abuses. The necessity for liturgies can arise only from the absence of the appropriate qualifications for the sacred function in the ministers of the Church; and to argue from their expediency in such cases, their indispensableness in all,—to make the incom-

petency of those who know not how to pray, the measure of the attainments and abilities of all who are condemned to the use of forms, is, to say the least, not very reasonable. The art of public speaking is confessedly of difficult acquirement; nevertheless, experience shews that it is within the reach of a decent mediocrity of talent, and that a facility of expression is the easy result of habit. The sacred duties of the pulpit are attended by peculiar advantages, since, in proportion as the mind is abstracted from external objects, which will be the effect of a powerful sense of spiritual realities,—in proportion as the attention is distinctly concentrated upon the simple purpose of its exertions,—the difficulty of recollection and expression becomes indefinitely lessened, and words seem to suggest themselves with an instinctive propriety. Prayer is rightly denominated a gift, because effectual fervent prayer can proceed only from a spiritual mind and a renewed heart; but, in relation to the human faculties, it may be strictly termed a habit; a habit the most natural to a pious mind, the most delightful in its exercise, and, taking into consideration the promised aids of the Holy Spirit, the most easy and certain of attainment.* If the pious clergy experience any

* “The Gift of Prayer,” (they are the words of an Episcopal divine) “may be thus described. It is such a readiness and faculty, proceeding from the Spirit of God, whereby a

difficulty in extemporaneous devotion, (which it may be confidently presumed they do not, at least to an equal degree, in private,) the circumstance is purely attributable to their being so long habituated to the mechanical operations of the reading-desk.*

“ man is enabled, upon all occasions, in a fitting manner, to
 “ express and to enlarge the desires of his heart in this duty.
 “ Unto the attaining of this *gift* in its true latitude and ful-
 “ ness there are three sorts of ingredients required: 1. Some-
 “ thing to be *infused* by the Spirit of God. 2. Some *natu-*
 “ *ral* endowments and abilities. 3. Something to be *acquired*
 “ or gotten by our own industry.” Bishop WILKINS *on*
the Gift of Prayer, p. 2.

* The same excellent writer refers to “two extremes,
 “ which usually hinder men from a proficiency in this gift.”
 One of these is, he says, “when they so confine themselves to
 “ the help of books and particular set-forms, as not to aim
 “ at, or attempt after any further improvement of their own
 “ knowledge and abilities in this kind.” “For any one,” he
 adds, “so to sit down and satisfy himself with his book-
 “ prayer, or some prescript form, as to go no farther, this
 “ were still to remain in his infancy, and not to grow up in
 “ his new nature. This would be, as if a man who had *once*
 “ need of crutches, should *always* make use of them, and so
 “ necessitate himself to a continual impotence. And if it be a
 “ fault not to strive and labour after this gift of prayer, much
 “ more is it to jeer and despise it by the name of *ex tempore*
 “ prayer, and praying by the Spirit; which expressions (as
 “ they are frequently used by some men by way of reproach)
 “ are for the most part a sign of a profane heart, and such as
 “ are altogether strangers from the power and comfort of this
 “ duty.” *Ibid.* pp. 11, 12.

Argument
from diffi-
culty in
joining in
free prayer.

[3.] A third argument in favour of liturgies, is raised on the supposition that they are more favourable to the general concurrence of the congregation in the public service. It is represented as more easy for persons to follow the minister by the aid of a formulary, than to take part in extemporary prayer. Much may, in this respect, be conceded to the effect of early habit in persons accustomed to join only in services which they could repeat *memoriter*, and whose earliest associations and deepest emotions have attached them to those venerated forms. They may possibly find it laborious to keep up their attention to the service of domestic or of public worship, when conducted in a method to them altogether novel. Yet there is scarcely room to doubt that the effect of any powerful excitement of devotional feeling in the same individuals, whether produced by fear, by sorrow, or by sympathy, would be to destroy at once all sense of difficulty in taking part in the fervent prayer prompted by the occasion, and to make that mode of pouring out the common feeling before Him who heareth prayer, commend itself as the most natural to the heart.

With regard to its being found by many persons more easy to follow the language of the Prayer-book, than to take part in extemporary prayer, there is reason to fear, that this very circumstance is the source of a dangerous de-

lusion. Persons are often led to imagine, while mechanically listening to the well-known collect, and reciting the ancient creed, that they are actually performing a spiritual sacrifice; and they are not so sensible, as they would be, were the service unfamiliar, or varied, how, during the whole process, their thoughts have been occupied with a thousand impertinences,—perhaps, among those impertinences, with the beauty and admirable appropriateness of the forms that were being recited,—and their spirits idle and slumbering. It is not equally easy for those who attend the extemporary service, if their hearts are not devotionally interested, to deceive themselves with the idea that they are taking part in the common prayer. The indolent hearer knows that he is indolent; the formalist, that he exhibits only the form. Much of the alleged difficulty of following such services, is resolvable into the fact, that they in a manner necessitate an exercise of mind altogether different from the mechanical habit of going along in the accustomed routine of a liturgy, and that by presenting at every moment the means of self-detection, they seem to render attention more arduous, because they discover its vagrancy.

Some objectors have gravely represented, (and one is astonished to find so sensible a writer as Paley, adopt it as an argument in favour

of liturgies,) that in following extemporaneous services, the hearer has the course of his feelings perpetually interrupted by being compelled to suspend, till the end of each sentence, the consentaneous act of mental prayer; "that, before he can address the same request to God for himself, and from himself, his attention is called off to keep pace with what succeeds:" as if the rapidity of thought were not adequate to the mind's seizing the meaning of the half-developed sentence, so as completely to anticipate its utterance! But what is the actual fact? A regular attendance upon any minister who adopts the method of free prayer, not only augments, by the mere force of habit, the facility of attention, but so familiarizes the auditory to certain habitual trains of thought and modes of expression, as to enable them to adopt the successive sentences, with scarcely the consciousness that they originate in suggestions external to their own minds. It is very possible to listen to prayers offered up in any mode, with the same apathy with which one would hear a child recite its school exercise; nor is it in the power of the conductor of extemporaneous prayer, any more than it is in that of the reader of a form, to compel the attention of the thoughtless; but as to the question of difficulty, a Christian of devout habits and spiritual mind, does not experience less in accompanying the

oft-repeated words of the Prayer-book with adequate attention or lively feelings, than in uniting in the free exercise of devotion.

That what is spoken with energy and feeling, is far more impressive than the best-read address, will scarcely be denied. Recited compositions may succeed in delighting the taste, or in convincing the judgment; but the heart—the spirit is not moved, except by means of sympathy with the speaker. In fact, mere earnestness of manner, the impassioned tone, and the all-pervading animation of genuine feeling, will often, in spite of ourselves, affect us, when every other attribute of eloquence is wanting. This is remarkably illustrated in the different effects produced by opposite modes of preaching. It has been sarcastically remarked, that while actors speak of fictions as if they were realities, the clergy are too generally wont to speak of realities, as if they were fictions. But this is not universally the case; and the impression which a more affecting style of pulpit address has upon the audience, is remarkably conspicuous in the large congregations uniformly collected by the Evangelical clergy. Is there, then, any thing in the nature of the public service of devotion, that should exclude the operation of sympathy from having its natural share in producing those emotions which it is the design of social worship to awaken?

* PALEY'S
Moral Phi-
losophy, Vol.
II. p. 58.

“ A congregation,” it has been argued, “ may
“ be pleased and affected with the prayers and
“ devotion of their minister, without joining in
“ them, in like manner as an audience oftentimes
“ are with the representation of devotion upon
“ the stage, who nevertheless come away with-
“ out being conscious of having experienced
“ any act of devotion among themselves.”* But
allowing that, in a certain proportion of cases,
no other result takes place, (although the pa-
rallel cannot be for a moment admitted to have
either force or propriety,) the question to be
determined, is, whether the being affected with
the devotion of another, does not *tend* to gene-
rate devout feeling, and to incline the mind to
inward prayer. If this natural tendency only
be admitted, notwithstanding any thing that
may be urged as to the uncertainty of its issu-
ing in effect, the argument in favour of a mode
of prayer adapted thus to operate on the mind,
remains complete. But there is no occasion to
stop short at this point: it may be affirmed,
that whatsoever impression may be produced
on the spectators by the mimicry of devotion
in theatric representation, (an exhibition which
ought to inspire with only horror and disgust,)
it is extremely improbable, that persons in a
congregation, assembled for public worship,
should be either pleased or affected with the
prayers of the minister, which yet have not the

effect of inducing them to join in the act of prayer. The influence of sympathy in this case, partakes (which it cannot do in the other) of a moral efficacy, acting, or at least being adapted to act, upon the conscience. The argument now combated, tacitly admits, that the effect produced by the recital of a liturgy, is not of a similar kind: otherwise, the alleged objection to extemporary prayer, would be totally irrelevant. It rests then with these objectors to explain how it comes to pass, that a Church which systematically takes into its service all the various artificial methods of exciting such emotions as are thought to pre-dispose the mind to devout worship,—which calls in the aid of music, painting, architecture, vestments, to solemnize and illude the mind, should yet reprobate the method which nature has herself provided, founded on the universal law of sympathy, as tending only to enthusiasm; just as if, in religion, the imagination rather than the affections, were the proper medium of emotion; as if, so long as the language of the ritual, and the circumstantials of the performance, are adapted to gratify the taste, it mattered not how little there might be in the personal character and manner of the minister himself, to move the best feelings of the heart. In the Episcopal Church, accordingly, to read prayers is the

function of the inferior minister, while to read a sermon is deemed the province of the superior! And it is indeed highly fitting that the pulpit should rank in dignity above the reading-desk. But that prayer, the most important part, as it is always represented, of the public service,—that solemn act in which the creature is brought into immediate communion with the Creator, should be degraded into the recitation of a form, and become a drudgery in the hands of the hired curate;—nothing that is crude, or eccentric, or indecorous in the extemporaneous services of the Dissenters, can surely come up to this!

But the argument derives still greater force from the consideration, that it enters into the very design of the institution of social worship, to afford scope for the operation of religious sympathy; that to be so affected by the devotion of the minister, as to kindle at his fervour and to share in his zeal, is as much comprehended in the purpose which we ought to have in view in our attendance in the house of prayer, as to join in the supplications which he presents. What is the end of prayer, but to keep alive a sense of our wants and of our dependence, and to bring into exercise those dispositions of heart in relation to unseen realities, which constitute the essence of religion? Prayer is not merely an ordained condition of our

receiving good ; it is a means of putting us into the possession of spiritual blessings ; it is that vital breath which the soul lives by exhaling. Social prayer is designed both to unite the hearts of men in the common exercise of holy dispositions, and to augment the force of their operation in each, by means of that mysterious excitement which assembled numbers reciprocally impart. This mainspring of emotion, thus called into exercise for the purpose for which it was implanted in our nature, is rendered conducive to the very life of religion in the soul. Why then should what confessedly tends to this result,—the natural operation of sympathy with the fervour, and earnestness, or plain sincerity of the speaker, be disregarded, or contemned ? The emotions produced by sympathy, of whatever kind they are, may be, no doubt, as illusive as they are transitory ; and religious emotions, if they have no deeper source, will die away like other excitements, when the cause has ceased to act. But this does not prove, that such emotions have not in themselves a salutary tendency, or that they are not adapted permanently to influence the character. The mere emotions of taste have, on the contrary, no similar connexion with the moral principles of our nature. They terminate upon self. The pomp of Gothic aisles, the dim religious light, the thrilling chaunt and deep underswell of the

organ, “the painted altar, and the white-robed “priest,”—all that constituted popery the religion of poetry and of the arts,—all that Protestant Episcopacy still cherishes in her cathedrals,—these solemnize the imagination; but do they encourage one benevolent feeling? Do they not rather tend to abstract the individual from those around him, to elevate him in all the self-sufficiency of intellect above the distasteful sphere of ordinary realities, to inclose him within his own feelings, so as to counteract the design of social worship? And is not the Prayer-book, in too many cases, an accessory to that refined sentimental semblance of devotion, with which individuals love to soothe their consciences, who would startle at the unaccustomed tones of genuine prayer.

Far removed from the intention of the writer is any insinuation, that the use of forms is not perfectly compatible with the most exalted spirit of devotion; but when, in self-defence, the advocates of extemporaneous services are called upon to vindicate their preference of a method against which are brought so formidable objections, it becomes necessary to institute a comparison between the respective tendencies of the opposite modes. Without questioning the expediency of a liturgy in the Established Church, where the pastoral office is not filled up with any deference to the choice of

the congregation,* and the minister is consequently, in so large a proportion of cases, a man unaccustomed to pray; still, Nonconformists must be allowed to retain the conviction, that the extemporaneous mode is in itself more conducive to the life and spirit of devotion, to the exercise of the social affections, and to the sanctification of the heart. “What one
 “ says of *counsel* to be had from books,” (remarks Bishop WILKINS in his Discourse already referred to,) “may be fitly applied to this
 “ *prayer* by book, That ’tis commonly of itself,
 “ something flat and dead, floating for the most
 “ part too much in *generalities*, and not *particu-*
 “ *lar* enough for each several occasion. There
 “ is not that life and vigour in it, to engage the
 “ affections, as when it proceeds immediately
 “ from the soul itself, and is the natural expres-
 “ sion of those particulars, whereof we are most
 “ sensible.” The opportunity which free prayer affords for adopting the train of devout thought, and the tenor of the supplications, to the exigen-

* The argument used by Bishop BULL, that “If a man come
 “ into a congregation where the minister is left to pray as he
 “ pleases, he cannot immediately join with him in prayer,
 “ unless he have an implicit, that is, a foolish faith and con-
 “ fidence in the person that prays,”—falls to the ground, as wholly inapplicable to Dissenters, who know beforehand the character and qualifications of their minister, and whose attendance proceeds from an intelligent choice.

cies or proprieties of the occasion; the scope which it allows to the operation of those influxes of solemn feeling which sometimes visit the mind in the act and attitude of prayer; the salutary necessity to which it subjects the minister, of cultivating in the closet the habits which can alone qualify him for the duties of the pulpit: these are to be enumerated among the many important advantages of that method which is exclusively sanctioned by Apostolic practice. Does it not afford, moreover, some degree of presumptive evidence in favour of the superior efficiency of extemporaneous services, in regard to the interest which they excite, that while the recital of the Liturgy, even with all the solemn and picturesque accompaniments of the cathedral service, on the days appointed by the Church, when no sermon is preached, is found insufficient to attract a regular audience, the prayer-meetings of the Dissenters exhibit the primitive spectacle of "many gathered together, "praying?" May not the exemplary observance of the duty of family worship among the members of Dissenting Churches, *generally*, be appealed to as furnishing legitimate evidence of the practical efficacy of their public devotions, in cherishing the spirit of prayer? Does it not suggest the possibility of there being some deficiency of adaptation to the wants and feelings of the heart, in that mode of

worship which seems to awaken so much more of admiration than of interest? Can it be denied, that we are more strongly affected by hearing a good man pray, than by hearing him read a prayer? And is it not natural, that persons who are themselves habituated to the free expression of their own devout feelings in secret, should prefer that mode of social worship which seems most to come home to the heart? Will not the tones, the language of sympathy, the voice of the friend heard in the prayer of the pastor, be more soothing to him who seeks in the house of prayer that relief to his burdened mind, and those heavenly consolations which the hope of the Gospel imparts, than the never-varying iteration of the same cold forms? It must be so; and whatsoever speculative objections, therefore, may be brought against the extemporary mode, facts and considerations such as these, sufficiently establish its practical advantages and superior efficiency. It is very likely that the public services of the Nonconformists, may not be in all respects acceptable to men of taste; nor is it, perhaps, possible, or even desirable that they should be, since men of taste form a very inconsiderable proportion of those who receive the Gospel of Christ; but we may be well assured, that neither the prevalence of prayer, nor its spiritual efficacy is, in the slightest degree, affected by such a circum-

stance as this. As to those general charges of irreverence, vulgarity, and gross impropriety, so frequently adduced by objectors to extemporaneous prayer, "we are still persuaded," to adopt the words of Hooker in reply to a similar species of argument, "that a bare denial is answer sufficient to things which mere fancy objecteth. Our answer therefore to their reasons is, No; to their scoffs, Nothing."*

* "It is the manner of some, to *speake evil of the things they know not*. But supposing ministers dropped a less proper expression, they ought not to be thought worthy of such treatment; especially since the prayers of the ancients were not always the most exact, to say nothing worse of them. This is taken notice of by *Austin*, who, by a prudent advice, endeavoured to prevent honest men's being laughed at upon that account. 'When they (says he) come to be made Christians, who excel others in the art of speaking, we must inculcate upon them one thing, over and above what we do upon illiterate persons; namely, we must diligently admonish them to be clothed with Christian humility, that they may learn not to despise those who, they will see, more carefully avoid a fault in their actions, than in their expressions; and may not dare compare an eloquent tongue with a pure heart, though they have been used to give it the preference. Make them understand, that not the voice, but the affections of the soul, reach God's ears; for then they will not laugh, if they observe any of the bishops, and ministers of the Church, are guilty of barbarisms, or solecisms, in their praying to God; or do not understand, but blunder in the words they pronounce.' (*De Catech. rudib.* c. 9. Tom. iv. pp. 298 & 262.)

§ 4. When the Book of Common Prayer was first instituted in the room of the Latin Service-book, in the reign of Edward the Sixth, not only was the exchange in itself highly important and valuable, but it was the best measure which could, under the existing circumstances, have been adopted. The general ignorance which prevailed, as well as the inveterate prejudices of the clergy, rendered some such substitute indispensable. The innovation was not suffered to pass without a struggle from “*the old papalins.*” “This last communion,” said a popish parson in Queen Mary’s reign, “was the most devilish thing that ever was devised.” Before this “General Public Office” came forth, there were a great variety of forms of prayer and communion in use: the Popish service-books of Sarum, of Hereford, of York, of Ban-

Book of
Common
Prayer.

“Whence, by the way, ’tis plain bishops and ministers were not bound up, at that time, to the use of a set form of words in prayer.” PIERCE’S *Vindication of the Dissenters*, Part iii. c. iv. p. 405. “That they (the primitive Christians) had no such prayer-book, appears yet more evidently from *Tertullian*, who describing their public prayers, says—that “looking up to heaven, they spread abroad their hands, “because innocent; uncovered their heads, because not “ashamed; and *without a monitor, because they prayed from “the heart.*” See the argument pursued, relative to the worship of the Primitive Church, in Lord KING’S *Inquiry*, Part ii. p. 33–42.

gor, and of Lincoln, which were followed by different churches, remained still in force; and the English forms which had been partially introduced, were termed *innovations* and *new rites*; they had, indeed, been expressly forbidden by the Government, although it was afterwards thought fit to connive at them for a while.*

* STRYPE'S
Memorials,
B. I. c. ii.
A. D. 1548.

“For the preventing of this different serving of God, (for by it great divisions and contentions happened,) the *King resolved* to have one form of prayer composed, to be only used, and none other, throughout his realm.”

The real design was to prevent the priests, who were ill-affected towards the Reformation, and who understood perhaps, says Strype, better to mumble over the Latin service than to read the English book, from making use of the popish missals. In the royal circular addressed to the Bishops, urging the strict observation of the Common Prayer, the King exhorts them “to put away all vain expectation of having the public service, &c. in the Latin tongue, which were a preferring of ignorance to knowledge, and darkness to light.”* At length, in the

* One of the grounds on which the English Service Book was deprecated, is curious enough; as being the very counterpart to the objection raised against extemporary prayer by the advocates of liturgies, that the people “are merely hearers,” and so in manner pray not at all. The following remark is attributed to “as learned a man as any in his

third and fourth of Edward the Sixth, the popish service-books were called in and abolished by act of parliament.

“ Though even the first Communion Service,
 “ and the first book of public prayers, struck
 “ off,” as we are told, “ abundance of supersti-
 “ tions, and reduced the service of God to the
 “ primitive pattern and the rule of God’s word,
 “ yet the Reformers never looked upon it so
 “ perfect, but that it might admit of amendment
 “ and improvement.”† Accordingly, two years
 after (1550), it “ underwent a diligent inspection
 “ and reformation by some of the bishops.”
 One of the rules then first inserted was this:
 “ *If there be a Sermon, or for other great cause,*

† STRYPE,
 p. 216.

“ time,” John Christoferson, Bishop of Chichester, 1557.
 “ When they, (the people,) come to churche, and heare the
 “ priestes who sayeth common prayer for all the whole multi-
 “ tude; albeit *they understand them not*, yet if they be oc-
 “ cupied in godly prayer themselves, it is sufficient for them.
 “ And lette them not so greatly passe for *understandynge*
 “ what the priestes say, but travayle themselves in fervent
 “ praying, and so shal they hyghly please God. Yea and
 “ experience hath playnlye taught us, that *it is much better*
 “ *for them* not to understande *the common service of the*
 “ *churche then* to understand it, because, that when they
 “ heare other prayinge with a lowde voyce in the language
 “ that they *understande*, they are lettid from prayer them-
 “ selfe, and so come to such a slackness and negligence in
 “ prayinge, that they, at lengthe, in maner praye not at all.”
 LEWIS’S *History of Translations. Prefatory Dissertation.*

“ the curate by his discretion may leave out the
“ Litany, *Gloria in Excelsis*, the Creed, T’ho-
“ mily and the Exhortation to Communion.”
The venerable framers of the English Prayer-book, were far from designing, as it is evident, to impose that rigid unabatable adherence to the prescribed course of services, which is now enforced upon the clergy on pain of suspension. The length of the prayers was then confided to the discretion of the minister, and in case of a sermon being preached, it was considered as proper, that those portions of the service, in particular, which were adapted to supply that too common deficiency, should be omitted. The prohibitory force of the enactment, was directed, not against extemporary prayer, for this, such was the state of the clergy, there was no occasion to discountenance, but against the Latin Mass-book. The original design of liturgies, as it is declared in the Preface to the English Prayer-book, was, “ that all the whole
“ Bible (or the greatest part thereof,) should be
“ read over once every year, intending thereby,
“ that the Clergy, and especially such as were
“ ministers in the congregation, should (by
“ often reading, and meditation in God’s word)
“ be stirred up to godliness themselves, and be
“ more able to exhort others by wholesome
“ doctrine; and further, that the people (by
“ daily hearing of Holy Scripture read in the

“ Church) might continually profit more and
“ more in the knowledge of God.” “ But,” it
is added, “ these many years passed, this god-
“ ly and decent order of the ancient Fathers hath
“ been so altered, broken, and neglected, by
“ planting in uncertain stories, and legends,
“ with multitude of responds, verses, vain repe-
“ titions, commemorations and synodals; that
“ commonly when any book of the Bible was
“ begun, after three or four chapters were read
“ out, all the rest were unread. And moreover,
“ whereas St. Paul would have such language
“ spoken to the people in the Church, as they
“ might understand, and have profit by hear-
“ ing the same; the service in this Church of
“ England these many years hath been read in
“ Latin to the people, which they understand
“ not, so that they have heard with their ears
“ only, and their heart, spirit, and mind, have
“ not been edified thereby.” “ From hence,”
remarks Vincent Alsop, “ we are evidently
“ taught, First, That the true original of litur-
“ gies, was only an order for the methodical
“ reading of the Scriptures for the benefit of an
“ ignorant clergy, and sottish people: and, Se-
“ condly, That that wherein the Reformers glo-
“ ried to have out-done Popery and edified the
“ people, was, that they had procured them
“ their worship in a language understood.”

Since the 5th and 6th of Edward VIth, the

Liturgy has undergone three revisions: first, when re-established by I. Elizabeth; again, in the first year of King James; and lastly, in 1661, the xivth of Charles the Second, when the last Act of Uniformity was passed. The alterations made in the Service at these different periods, were, however, extremely few and unimportant; and many of them, so far from being dictated by the spirit of the Reformation, were rather adapted to cherish the lurking remains of Popish superstition. The various applications since made for a review, have been altogether unsuccessful. The same jealousy of prerogative which led the Government, in the reign of King Edward, before the Communion Book was published, to forbid the use of English services, on private authority, as an arrogant forestalling of the King's godly orders, displayed itself, to a still more prejudicial extent, in the succeeding reigns, when the disposition to carry forward the work of Reformation, gave place to a less enlightened policy, and the Puritans became, instead of the Papists, the objects of suspicion and enmity. Extemporary prayers now came to be regarded as a far worse abomination than the Mass-book, and more violent measures were resorted to, in order to force an observance of the rites and ceremonies which the Church claimed the power to decree, than had ever been employed to

make the papalins read prayers in the English tongue. The minutes of the Savoy Conference shew how little disposition there existed at that period, to concede an iota to the objections raised against the Prayer-book, by Protestants of the most distinguished learning and piety. Since then, we have heard only of the perfection of the Liturgy, and two thousand clergymen were sacrificed to the intrigues of a wicked faction, for being of a contrary opinion. Their scruples were, of course, attributed by their persecutors, to sanctimonious obstinacy. Their own explanation of their conduct was this: “ They
 “ scruple giving up their consciences to those
 “ whom they see no great reason to trust, till
 “ better evidence be given how they regard their
 “ own.*

* *Melius In-
 quirendum,*
 p. 39.

At no period, however, could the use of the Prayer-book have been generally dispensed with in the Establishment. Had the imposition only been less rigorous and unconditional, had free prayer been still allowed to those who stood not in need of a form, little controversy would have arisen as to the general expedience of the enactment, while the excellence of the compilation, in connexion with the habits of the clergy, would have effectually secured its adoption. From the Reformation to the Commonwealth, a very large proportion of the Churches were supplied by mere readers, whose

utter incompetency either to preach or to pray, rendered the expedient of a prescribed form absolutely necessary. Many of the benefices remained in the hands of concealed papists, and the general character of the clergy was so low, both in respect to moral and intellectual qualifications, that when in the reign of Elizabeth, a survey was made by royal authority, of the state of the parishes throughout the kingdom, there did not appear, on the face of the returns, to be one minister in ten tolerably qualified for the office. To be able to read, was, in those times, a distinguishing attainment, and even the parish-clerk was not unfrequently in holy orders. Sermons were for the most part, in the country cures, out of the question, and it was literally true, no Common Prayer-book, no Common Prayer. The value of such a compilation as the English Liturgy, at that period, considered simply as a means of instruction, must not be lightly appreciated. Richard Baxter, who describes the state of the parochial clergy as being, when he was young, deplorable in the extreme, in point of both ignorance and immorality, yet frankly testifies that he joined in the Liturgy, then, with as hearty fervency as afterward he did with other prayers. “As long as I had no prejudice against it, I had no stop in my devotions from any of its imperfections.” * So true is it that the spirit of piety is often

*Life and
Times, fol.
Part I. § 17.*

found in combination with the humblest degrees of religious knowledge! Let this simple-hearted statement have all the weight which it can claim: it is certainly adapted to repress any doubt, (if such doubts are entertained,) as to the efficiency of the written service for the purposes of devotion; it may teach Dissenters to unite with a just preference of their own mode, a respectful and candid appreciation of the ritual of the Episcopal church. It is the spirit of imposition which is to be deprecated, as the source of all the unhallowed feelings which have mingled in this controversy,—the impious attempt to prescribe to men in what way alone they shall be suffered to unite in prayer to their Maker.

§ 5. An opposition of sentiment similar to that which prevails on the subject of public prayer, extends itself to the notions respectively entertained by the two parties, relative to the ordinance of preaching. There is, perhaps, no criterion of the state of religion within a Christian community, more certain, than the degree of importance which is attached to this branch of instituted duty. It is impossible not to be struck with the contrast which is exhibited by the language of many Episcopal divines on this subject, and that in which the New Testament writers uniformly advert to the preaching of the Cross, as the grand purpose of their ministry.

On the ordinance of Preaching.

“Prayer,” says Bishop Bull, “is the principal
 “and most noble part of God’s worship, and to
 “be preferred before preaching; nay, indeed,
 “to speak strictly and properly, preaching is
 “no part of Divine worship. By preaching we
 “are taught how to worship God; but prayer
 “is itself God’s worship. Hence the place of
 “God’s worship is styled by our Saviour, the
 “*House of Prayer*. It is not called a preach-
 “ing house, (though there must be preaching
 “there too at due times and seasons,) but a
 “house of prayer, because prayer is the princi-
 “pal worship of God, to which all religious
 “houses are dedicated, and it is the constant
 “and daily business to be performed in them.”*

* *Primitive
 Christianity. Sermon
 xiii.*

The confusion of ideas apparent in this absurd attempt to depreciate preaching, is quite characteristic of writers of this stamp, when they get entangled in Levitical analogies. The temple at Jerusalem was so far exclusively a house of prayer, that preaching formed no part of the ceremonial worship to which it was dedicated: but while there was this one and only temple, there were *preaching-houses* in every city, where Moses and the Law were expounded every Sabbath-day. The sacerdotal function had nothing in common with the Christian * minis-

* “The circumstance of the Priests and Levites having
 “their abode fixed in forty-eight distinct cities of their own,
 “altogether incapacitated them for performing the duties

try; but did the learned Bishop forget that though the priests did not preach, the Jews had even antecedently to the institution of Synagogues, their prophets and schools of the prophets, and, subsequently to the captivity, their doctors as well as their scribes? These were not attached to the Temple, for in that case, the religious instruction of the people at large, would have been unprovided for. The synagogues formed no part of the Levitical economy, but they received, nevertheless, the Divine sanction. Christians also have their synagogues; but have Christians, on any holy mountain, a metropolitan Temple, "a house of prayer for all nations," as the Bishop's words would seem to intimate? No: the time is come, when in every house men are alike authorized to worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Once the Almighty permitted his servant, Solomon, to "build him a house," and there it was His good pleasure in a peculiar sense to reside;

" of the clergy in regard to religious instruction, and what
 " we call *the cure of souls*: for what more absurd could be
 " imagined, than our having cities in which several hundred
 " preachers dwelt together, while not one lived in our other
 " cities, or was dispersed through the country? The Levites,
 " therefore, cannot be justly compared with our preachers.
 " So likewise, the priests of the gods in other nations,
 " were occupied not in instruction, but in sacrifices and ce-
 " remonies." MICHAELIS'S *Commentaries*, Vol. I. Art. 52.

but ever since the Incarnate Shekinah, the Living Temple, dwelt with men, the term "House of God," has ceased to have any appropriateness as applied to "Temples made with hands."

As to the rest of the Bishop's statement, I cannot do better than oppose to it the following admirable remarks of another prelate of the same Church, to whom frequent reference has been made. Referring to the Apostolic times, Bishop Stillingfleet remarks: "Public prayers
" were not then looked upon as the more principal end of Christian assemblies than preaching, nor consequently that it was the more
" principal office of the stewards of the mysteries of God, to read the public prayers of the
" Church, than to preach 'in season and out of
" 'season.' Were the Apostles commissioned
" by Christ to go pray or preach? And what
" is it wherein the ministers of the Gospel succeeded the Apostles? Is it in the office of
" praying or preaching? Was Paul sent not to
" baptize but to preach the Gospel? And shall
" we think those who succeed Paul in his office
" of preaching, are to look upon any thing else
" as more their work than that? Aye, but the
" reason is unanswerable, that praying is the
" more principal end of Christian assemblies
" than preaching; for the one is the end and the
" other the means. If by end be meant the ul-

“ timate end of all Christian duties, that cannot
“ be prayer; for that is a means itself in order
“ to that; but the chief end is the fitting souls
“ for eternal praises. If then this unanswer-
“ able reason hold good, the principal end of
“ Christian assemblies, must be only praise and
“ not prayer. If by the end be meant, the im-
“ mediate end of preaching, as that it refers to,
“ that it cannot be; for the immediate end of
“ preaching, if the Apostle may be judge, is
“ instruction and edification in the faith. Ra-
“ ther, preaching is the end of praying, inas-
“ much as the blessings conveyed by preach-
“ ing are the things which men pray for.
“ But this is one of those unhappy conse-
“ quences which follow men’s judging of the
“ service of God, rather by the practices of the
“ Church, when it came to enjoy ease and plenty,
“ than by the ways and practices of the first
“ and purest Apostolic times, when the Apo-
“ stles, who were best able to judge of their
“ own duty, looked upon themselves as most
“ concerned in the preaching of the Gospel.

“ But to this it is commonly said: There
“ was great reason for it then, because the
“ world was to be converted to Christianity, and
“ therefore preaching was the more necessary
“ work at that time; but when a nation is con-
“ verted to the faith, that necessity ceaseth. It
“ is granted, that the preaching of the Gospel,

“ in regard to its universal extent, was more ne-
 “ cessary then, which was the foundation of
 “ Christ’s instituting the Apostolic office with
 “ an unlimited commission: but if we take
 “ preaching as referring to particular congre-
 “ gations, there is the same necessity now that
 “ there was then. People need as much in-
 “ struction as ever, and so much the more in
 “ that they are apt to think now the name of
 “ Christians will carry them to heaven. It is a
 “ too common and very dangerous deceit of
 “ men, to look upon Religion more as a profes-
 “ sion than matter of life, more as a notion than
 “ an inward temper. Men must be beat off from
 “ more things which they are apt to trust to for
 “ salvation now, than in those times. Men
 “ could not think so much then, that diligence
 “ in public assemblies, and attendance at pub-
 “ lic prayers, was the main of religion. Few
 “ would profess Christianity in those times, but
 “ such as were resolved beforehand rather to
 “ let go their lives than their profession; but
 “ the more profess it now, without understand-
 “ ing the terms of salvation by it, the greater
 “ necessity of preaching to instruct men in it.
 “ But I think more need not be said of this to
 “ those who know it is another thing to be a
 “ Christian, than to be called so.”*

Irenicum.
 Part II. C.
 vi. § 19.

At one period, the importance of preaching,
 as the grand business of the Evangelical minis-

try, might strictly have been termed a tenet of Nonconformity ; for notwithstanding some exceptions similar to the above passage, in the writings of Episcopal divines, the sentiment itself has been generally regarded as Puritanical, and an evident anxiety has been betrayed by the established clergy in general, not to symbolize, in this respect, with the Calvinistic Dissenters. What has powerfully tended to exasperate the opponent parties into the extremes of opinion, has been the obviousness of the fact, that the Episcopal Church has been on this point exceedingly vulnerable, in consequence of the clergy being for the most part incompetent, as well as indisposed, to the task of preaching, and the churches being filled with mere readers of hired sermons. Hence it has been felt as imperative on the advocates of the Establishment, to attempt to demonstrate, first, that sermons are not a principal—are, in fact, a subordinate and dispensable part of the public service ; and secondly, that reading is preaching. Preaching is styled by Hooker—" The blessed ordinance of God ;" but then, the bare reading of the Scripture lessons of the Liturgy, he would fain have us regard as an efficient discharge of this part of the Christian ministry. The same sophistical apology for the deficiencies of the preacher, is still frequently adduced by members of the Establishment. " There are the

“ Prayers and the lessons of the Liturgy : if these
 “ do not avail, what would sermons effect ?” How
 urgent must be the necessity which drives good
 men into such subterfuges of reasoning ! Vain,
 vain, as experience amply testifies, are all the
 formalities of the desk, if the pulpit be lifeless.*

That those who deride the extemporary prayers of the Dissenters, should, in pursuance of the same policy, represent their pulpit compositions as exceptionable in doctrine, and contemptible in matter, is what one would naturally expect. The sermons of the Calvinistic preachers have been an exhaustless topic of ribaldry and invective ; nevertheless, their salutary efficiency, as exemplified on the broad scale of society, has continued to present a phenomenon not explicable on the principles of their adversaries. Nothing was so much feared by the Papists, as the sermons of the Reformers ; nothing was so offensive to the Churchmen of

* “ There is,” says RICHARD BAXTER, (“ I know not perfectly whence) among the most of the religious serious people of these countries, a greater inclination to a rational convincing earnest way of preaching and prayers, than to the written forms of words which are to be read in churches. And they are greatly taken with a preacher that speaketh to them in a familiar natural language, and exhorteth them as if it were for their lives ; when another that readeth, or saith a few composed words in a reading tone, they hear almost as a boy that is saying his lesson.” *Life and Times*, Part I. § 49.

former days, as the preaching of the Nonconformists. To silence them by any means, was the grand point to be secured. Fines, exiles, and imprisonment were called in to accomplish the object, and the basest treachery, together with an unsleeping vigilance, was employed in order to get into the grasp of power the men who durst by night, in the forest, or in the gravel pit, preach to eager multitudes the Gospel of Christ. These men, of whom the world was not worthy, persecuted by their fellow Protestants, by the rulers of what styled itself an Apostolic Church, were reduced to wander, like the confessors of primitive times, in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. Forbidden, like the Apostles by the Jewish rulers, to speak to men that they might be saved, they chose, under circumstances similar to theirs, to obey God rather than man. "Order and unity," which were made the pretence of those iniquitous measures, they acknowledged to be "very lovely and desirable things," but they thought it "of greater importance to conduct men, though not in so accurate order (which they could not help,) to heaven, than to let them go in the best order, yea, and as the case was, without any at all, to hell."* This was the sum and substance of their offending, the punishment of which fell less upon the immediate victims of persecution,

* HOWE'S
Letter con-
cerning Stil-
lingfleet's
Sermon.
Works, Vol.
iv. p. 439.

than upon the nation at large, who thereby suffered the abridgement to so great an extent, of the visible means of salvation. A hundred years elapsed, during which an Evangelical ministry remained almost extinct within the pale of the Established Church. The Homilies had become obsolete, the Articles a dead letter; moral essays, cold dialectics, were substituted for the preaching of the Cross; the doctrine of Conversion became a topic of ridicule with the clergy as a tenet of the Puritan theology; and the nation was fast relapsing into superstition and infidelity, when, like a storm succeeding the fearful stillness, Whitfield arose. To the instrumentality of that admirable man, upon whom while living, malignity emptied her quiver, this country is mainly indebted for that revival of religious zeal which distinguishes the present times. In him the spirit of Luther seemed to have returned to the earth, and the doctrines of the Reformation were again brought to act upon society with all their moral power. From his time, the preaching of the Gospel has once more come to be extensively recognised as the grand means of converting the ungodly to the obedience of faith, and of building up the Church of Christ,—as the true criterion of an Apostolic ministry.

The increase of the Evangelical clergy, is a remarkable feature in the times. Already do

they number nearly as many as were ejected by the Act of Uniformity, but born at a happier era, they have little to fear from the displeasure of their ecclesiastical superiors, or the utmost machinations of the Anti-Calvinistic faction. Their predecessors, the Puritans and Nonconformists, laboured, and suffered, and bled in the cause of religious liberty, and these have entered into their labours, indebted for their security and their usefulness to the very men whom too many of them are forward to depreciate, if not to revile.* A minority, however, in the Establishment they must, of necessity, remain; and looking at the present state of ecclesiastical patronage, it does not seem likely that their number should ever bear a much higher proportion to that of the secular clergy.

With regard to the *mode* of preaching usually adopted by Nonconformists, the same argu-

General
character of
Dissenting
Preachers.

* The Rev. Mr. SCOTT, the Commentator, has made a declaration on this subject which does him the highest honour. Many of the Puritans, he remarks, “were factious, ambitious
“hypocrites; but I must think that the tree of liberty, sober
“and legitimate liberty, civil and religious, under the shadow
“of which, we in the Establishment, as well as others, re-
“pose in peace, and the fruit of which we gather, was plant-
“ed by the Puritans, and watered, if not by their blood, at
“least by their tears and sorrows. Yet, it is the modern
“fashion to feed delightfully on the fruit, and then revile, if
“not curse, those who planted and watered it.” *Evil of Se-
paration*, 8vo. London, 1817.

ments which were adduced in vindication of free prayer, bear upon the question of extemporaneous delivery. The most ordinary sermons presuppose and require some degree of intellectual training, as well as a tolerable acquaintance with the Scriptures; and whether a sermon is written out at length and read, or recited *memoriter*, or whether the detail of expression is in a great measure left to be determined by the impulse of the occasion, the average results, as respects the quality of the composition, will not be found on that account greatly to differ, inasmuch as the mind may be habituated to exercise itself in either predicament with equal facility. Nor is extemporaneous speaking, when the subject is one which interests the feelings, and which comes fairly within the grasp of the understanding of the speaker, a habit more difficult to be attained than that of written composition. Nothing is more common than to meet with individuals possessing highly respectable pulpit talents, who are utterly unable to succeed in the expression of their sentiments by means of the pen, with any thing like a corresponding advantage. As to the improprieties which may fall from the lips of a public speaker, they can hardly be more gross or more numerous than are every day deliberately committed to the press.

Extemporaneous preaching, if that phrase is

meant to apply in a less restricted sense than regards the habit of delivery, is not the practice of the Protestant Dissenters. The most illiterate of their preachers are, with exceptions too few to affect the general statement, addicted to Scriptural research by the help of expositors and commentators, and to extensive theological reading, preparatory to the public service; and this habit arises not merely from the same bent of inclination which has led them to desire the work of the ministry, but from a sort of necessity imposed upon them by the religious knowledge and intelligence which are found diffused among the members of the humblest Dissenting community. Detraction may always discover some two or three cases to blazon as specious proofs of her calumnies; but, taking the very lowest ground in estimating the qualifications of the great body of Dissenting ministers, educated and uneducated, the assertion is far within the line of truth, that with whatsoever deficiencies they may be chargeable on the score of elocution, classical literature, mathematical science, and general knowledge, of this one thing they are not ignorant—the religion of the Bible: their acquaintance with theology is far beyond that of the generality of the clergy; their attainments in Biblical literature, so far as accessible in the vernacular language, may often bear a similar comparison; a large proportion of the

works of this kind which issue from the press, are, it is notorious, purchased by Dissenting ministers, notwithstanding their limited incomes. But with regard to the experimental science of Christianity, as the business of the heart and of the life, in its relations to the wants and hopes and characters of men, as sinful and as dying, to whom as such the Gospel brings the message of salvation,—in this respect, their competency for the office they have assumed, rests on far better grounds than that of many of the school-bred clergy, who glory in an episcopal ordination, which has conveyed to them nothing but the burden of an abused responsibility. “By their fruits ye shall know them.” The beneficial influence which the despised efforts of licensed preachers, has visibly exerted on the morals and social character of the lower classes, when all other expedients have failed, extending itself, in numerous instances, to the population of a township or a district which previously exhibited the most unfavourable aspect, is a fact attested by what is continually taking place in the light of day. Let the means be decried as fanatical; their operation must needs be viewed by men of this world as mysterious, but the effects it will be hard to dispute against. So it has ever pleased God, by that preaching which men deem foolishness, to save them who believe.

The preaching of the more regularly edu-

cated Protestant Dissenters, (who, if the Wesleyan Methodists are not included, form a very considerable proportion of licensed teachers, very few persons being admitted to the pulpits of the Nonconformists, who have not received some academical preparation for the ministry,) is of a description which does not warrant the subdued tone of apology. It exhibits, for the most part, an exertion of intellect, a solidity of thought, and an energy of feeling, which combining with the transcendent interest of the subject, present, in some instances, the nearest approaches to eloquence with which modern assemblies are familiar. Not that the crowded auditories which evangelical preaching, and such preaching only is found uniformly to attract, are held together by the mere powers of oratory: much as it is adapted to interest and impress, to witness the animation of a speaker who is obviously in earnest, the true secret of the attraction lies not in the preacher, but in his doctrine; is not attributable to the wisdom of man, but to the power of God.

“The greater part of most Dissenting congregations,” remarks a writer who will be admitted as a credible witness,* “consisting of plain people, who have not enjoyed the advantages of a learned education, nor had lei-

* The Rev. Dr. DODDRIDGE in his “*Free Thoughts on the most probable Means of reviving the Dissenting Interest.*” 1729.

“ sure for improvements by after-study, it is ap-
“ parently necessary, that a man should speak
“ plainly to them, if he desire they should un-
“ derstand and approve what he says. And as
“ for those who are truly religious, they attend
“ on public worship, not that they may be
“ amused with a form or sound, or entertained
“ with some new and curious speculation ; but
“ that their hearts may be enlarged as in the
“ presence of God, that they may be powerfully
“ affected with those great things of religion
“ which they already know and believe, that so
“ their conduct may be suitably influenced by
“ them. And to this purpose they desire that
“ their ministers may speak as if they were in
“ earnest, in a lively and pathetic, as well as a
“ clear and intelligible manner. Such is the
“ taste of the generality of Dissenters ; a taste
“ which I apprehend they will still retain, what-
“ ever attempts may be made to alter it ; and I
“ conceive this turn of thought to be the great
“ support of our interest. He who would be
“ generally agreeable to Dissenters, must be an
“ evangelical, an experimental, a plain and an
“ affectionate preacher. Now I must do our
“ common people the justice to own, that when
“ these points are secured, they are not very de-
“ licate in their demands, with regard to the
“ forms of a discourse. They will not, in such
“ a case, be very much disgusted, though there

“ be no regular chain of reasoning, no remark-
“ able propriety of thought or of expression, no
“ elegance of language, and but little decency
“ of address. The want of all these is forgiven,
“ to what they apprehend of much greater im-
“ portance. Yet, few of them like a discourse
“ the worse for being thoroughly good; and the
“ accomplished orator will find, perhaps to his
“ surprise, that they will not only know and feel
“ the important truths of religion in the most
“ agreeable dress he can give them, but that
“ they will even applaud the order and regular-
“ ity of his composures, the beauty of his lan-
“ guage, and the gracefulness of his delivery.
“ For human nature is so formed, that some
“ manners of thinking and speaking are univer-
“ sally agreeable and delightful. The man
“ who forms himself upon such views as these,
“ if he be not remarkably deficient in natural
“ capacities, will probably be popular among
“ the Dissenters, as a preacher: but this is not
“ the only character under which a minister is
“ considered. His people will naturally and
“ reasonably expect a conduct answerable
“ to his public discourses; and without it he
“ cannot be thoroughly agreeable to them. If a
“ man desire the affections of his people, he
“ must not disappoint such expectations.”

Such was the state of things among the Dis-
senter, in the beginning of the last century, and

they have not undergone, since then, any sensible change. Through all the fluctuations of fashion and opinion, the taste which is in the common people connected with the natural appetites of the heart, remains the same; and the supply of such preaching will always in some measure keep pace with the demand. Dr. Doddridge has, however, one remark to which the subsequent revival of evangelical religion in the Establishment, and its bearings upon Dissent, seem to impart almost the character of a warning, though not, I trust, that of a prediction. "I cannot," he says, "but believe, that if the Established clergy, and the Dissenting ministers in general, were mutually to exchange their strain of preaching, and their manner of living, but for one year, it would be the ruin of our cause, even though there should be no alteration in the constitution and discipline of the Church of England."

The Sacraments.

§ 6. The character of *means of grace*, belongs alike to all the ordinances of Christianity; but ecclesiastical usage has restricted the emphatic application of the phrase to those Divine institutions which are usually classed together under the denomination of Sacraments. It is respecting these, that the greatest embarrassment has seemed to attend the application of the Scripture-rule, as the sole authority in matters of faith. "Sacraments," remarks the great

champion of the English Church, “ by reason
 “ of their mixt nature, are more diversely inter-
 “ preted and disputed of, than any other parts
 “ of religion besides.” By a Sacrament,* the
 Church Catechism instructs us, is to be under-
 stood, “ An outward and visible sign of an in-
 “ ward and spiritual grace given unto us, or-
 “ dained by Christ himself as a means whereby
 “ we receive the same, and a pledge to assure
 “ us thereof;” and Hooker contends for their
 being “ indeed and in verity means effectual,
 “ whereby God, when we take the Sacraments,
 “ delivereth into our hands that grace available
 “ unto eternal life, which grace the Sacraments
 “ represent or signify.” In accordance with this
 language are such expressions as Sacramental
 grace, the Sacrament of faith, the grace of Bap-
 tism, which occur in that writer and in the
 works of other Episcopal divines of the same
 school. The effect of Baptism, according to
 the hypothesis to which these expressions are
 referrible, is, to admit the subject into a *state of*
grace. “ It may be,” Hooker goes so far as to

* The twenty-fifth Article declares, that “ Sacraments or-
 “ dained of Christ be not only badges or tokens of Christian
 “ men’s profession; but rather they be certain sure witnesses
 “ and effectual signs of grace and God’s good-will towards us,
 “ by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not
 “ only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in
 “ him.”

declare, “ that the *grace of Baptism* would serve
 “ to eternal life, were it not that the state of our
 “ spiritual being is so much hindered and im-
 “ paired after Baptism.” Confirmation, al-
 though by the twenty-fifth Article of the Church
 excluded from the number of the Sacraments,
 and therefore regarded as “ only a Sacramental
 “ complement,” is nevertheless considered as
 contributing to the development or increase of
 the grace conferred in Baptism, and from the
 stress laid upon this rite in the English Church,
 no small importance should seem to be attached
 to its supposed efficacy.* In like manner, the
 Eucharist, styled in pre-eminence—The Holy
 Sacrament, is termed “ an instrument of grace;”
 “ by which,” says Hooker, “ we so receive
 “ the gift of God, that we know by grace what
 “ the grace is which God giveth us.”† The
 due administration of these Sacraments, which
 is supposed to be a condition of their efficacy,
 consists, according to the notions of most Epis-
 copalians, in the legitimacy of the official cha-

† HOOKER,
 B. v. § 67.

* LAW affirms it to be “ a means of conferring grace by
 “ the prayer and imposition of the bishop’s hands.” HOOKER
 quotes, among many similar passages from the Fathers, the
 following declaration from Eusebius Emisenes : “ The Holy
 “ Ghost which descendeth with saving influence upon the
 “ waters of Baptism, doth there give that fulness which suf-
 “ ficeth for innocency, and afterwards exhibiteth in Confir-
 “ mation, an augmentation of further grace.” B. v, § 57.

racter of the minister, as derived from Episcopal ordination; hence the value of the Apostolic succession, as the channel of that Divine authority and efficient power which are considered as annexed to "the Christian priesthood." Upon some of these points, there exists a diversity of opinion within the Episcopal Church itself; for, with regard to the efficacy of the Sacraments, there might be formed a graduated scale of opinions, (the highest point in which is not distinguishable from the rankest popery,) but the general sentiment which under different modifications is held by all parties, is, that in the Sacramental element, when attended with "the word which expresseth what is done by the element," there resides a mystical efficacy, or grace, proper to the Sacrament, which is, in some sense or other, "available to salvation."

This peculiar and technical application of the term Grace, will require, in the first place, to be analyzed. The simple and primary import of the word, is, doubtless, Divine favour, in which sense it is employed by the New Testament writers, to denote the sovereign compassion of the Father and the love of Christ towards the people of God. The instances, however, of its being employed metonymically, as expressive of the *effects* of Divine favour, are very frequent and various, the word being in this sense susceptible of great latitude

Sacramental
Grace.

of application. Among these effects, the *imputation of the righteousness of Christ*, the communications of *spiritual influence*, the *state* of favour or reconciliation, the *doctrine* of reconciliation, and those virtues which are the *fruits* of Christianity, are all distinctly spoken of under the term—Grace. Yet, although employed in this extended signification, no confusion of ideas, nor any obscurity of meaning, arises from this circumstance. The word evidently had a charm with the Apostles, as significant of that on which they delighted to dwell; they seize every occasion for introducing it; but as often as it occurs, it seems to be the very phrase adapted to convey with the strongest emphasis, the ideas they laboured to communicate; nor is there, perhaps, a single passage, which would not lose some of its force, were another expression substituted for this. The word thus sanctioned by Scripture usage, is with great propriety transferred to theology in all the extent of its import. The Gospel itself is aptly characterized, in reference to the distinguishing peculiarity of the Christian economy, as the Doctrine of Grace. The expression is offensive to the irreligious, because it implies what the Gospel really requires us to believe,—that “by “grace,” from first to last, we must be saved; and “that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God.” Well knew the Romish Church, how to bring

down all that is spiritual, and sublime, and repugnant to the carnal mind in the religion of Jesus Christ, to the level of the grossest conceptions, and to reconcile its hardest requisitions to the self-love and indolence of the unregenerate heart. By means of the boldest fiction ever coined by the devices of man, the Doctrine of Grace became transformed into the Doctrine of Sacraments. That very word which the sacred writers employ to exclude in the most absolute manner all idea of dependence upon works, upon meritorious conditions, upon personal recommendations to the Divine favour, and, by asserting the sovereignty as well as the love of God, to remind the creature of his nothingness, has been perverted, to add dignity and importance to the performance of outward rites, to express the efficacy of works as the means of justification, and to sanction the arrogant claims of a fictitious priesthood. “Why “is the *opus operatum* in Sacraments,” inquires Dr. Barrow, “taught to confer grace, but to “breed a high opinion of the priest and all he “doth?” How revolting soever to reason may be this notion, no method could have been invented by which the doctrine of salvation by grace should be so completely divested of its humbling character and its spiritual tendency. According to this enigmatized Gospel, “man “is to be saved by grace,” yet still by himself;

Works, Vol.
I. p. 642.

“not by works,” yet by rites of his own performance; and this grace is “the gift of God,” but a gift conferred by the priest, who, in opposition to what the Apostle represents as the design of the Christian dispensation—“lest any man should boast,” did boast, and boast loudly of his imaginary prerogative. Thus, while the doctrine of the free love of God and justification through grace, as asserted from the pulpit, has been derided as foolishness, the notion of a conditional Sacramental grace, by which man may work out his own justification, as dispensed from the font or from the altar, has been received without distrust, without exciting one hostile prejudice of the heart.

When we speak of the communications of Divine Grace, one of two things must be implied: either the bestowment of that sovereign favour which regards the subject of it as justified, and the effect of which is a change of state; or the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit upon the heart, renewing or sanctifying its affections, or imparting fresh vitality to the principle of spiritual life. The notion that any means of grace can contribute to the former of these results, is clearly at variance with the doctrine of justification by faith;* for, in

* Yet this notion has HOOKER for its advocate: his language is at any rate very equivocal. “Baptism is,” he says, “a Sacrament which God hath instituted in his Church, to

order to partake in this respect of the character of means, in order to have any effect upon our state, otherwise than as promoting a change of character, they must have a justifying efficacy; or, at least, must be a condition of justification. But such a condition would clearly be of a meritorious nature, a deed of the law, utterly worthless as a means of obtaining the righteousness of Christ; nay, since a condition must take place antecedently to what it is designed to procure, a deed abhorrent to God as the self-righteous work of a man unjustified. Justification knows no degrees and no conditions. At what moment the human soul passes the awful boundary of the kingdom of darkness, and is translated into that of the Redeemer, and enters upon the life of God, is known only to Him who knoweth all things. It may be long before the spirit is conscious of the change, or its certain fruits appear; but the change can-

“ the end that they which receive the same might thereby
 “ be incorporated into Christ; and so through his most pre-
 “ cious merit obtain, as well that saving grace of imputation
 “ which taketh away all former guiltiness, as also that infused
 “ Divine vertue of the Holy Ghost which giveth to the powers
 “ of the soul their first disposition towards future newness of
 “ life.” *B. v. § 60.* The language of the Church Catechism refers us, without any qualification, to a change of state as positively consequent upon Baptism. “ *Wherein I was made*
 “ a member of Christ, a child of God,” &c.

not in itself be gradual, and as the cause of that change cannot be in man himself, so no work of his can accelerate or perfect that which has its origin in the sovereign determinations of Infinite Compassion, and the only means of which is the perfect work—the finished righteousness of a Saviour. That such a change necessarily or usually takes place at Baptism, is disproved by the incontestable argument of fact; that it ever does cannot be attributable to the efficacy of the rite; for, whatever encouragement there may be to hope that the Almighty will put honour upon his own institutions, in granting the prayer of faith at that solemn conjuncture, the proof of such a change being attendant upon the ordinance, seeing that Scripture contains no promise to that effect, can never be obtained. If such a change has previously taken place, then is not the Sacrament either the means or the condition of the grace. Any change which can be made in the state of the individual, by the outward rite, must be simply relative to the circumstances of external privilege and Christian profession. The change which relates to justification, is effected not by water, but by blood; not by sanctification, (for that is its fruit,) but by atonement.*

* “As these persons” (who represent the Sacraments merely as external badges) “weaken the force of the Sacraments, and entirely subvert their use; so there are others of

The communication of Divine grace may be taken in a second sense, in reference to the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit upon the moral nature of man ; and this is, perhaps, what is most commonly intended by the phrase—*Sacramental grace* ; that is to say, a spiritual influence given forth at the time of our participating in the outward rite. This grace is sometimes spoken of, agreeably to the Arminian hypothesis, as *common grace*, to distinguish it from that which is savingly efficacious ; nevertheless it is termed “inward and spiritual,” its effects

“ a contrary party, who attribute to the Sacraments I know
 “ not what latent virtues which are no where represented
 “ as communicated to them by the word of God. The so-
 “ phistical schools have maintained, with one consent, that
 “ the Sacraments now used in the Christian Church, justify
 “ and confer grace, provided we do not obstruct their opera-
 “ tion by any mortal sin. It is impossible to express the
 “ pestilence and fatal nature of this opinion, and especially
 “ as it has prevailed over a large part of the world, to
 “ the great detriment of the Church, for many ages past.
 “ Indeed, it is evidently diabolical ; for by promising justifi-
 “ cation without faith, it precipitates souls into destruction:
 “ in the next place, by representing the Sacraments as the
 “ cause of justification, it envelopes the minds of men, na-
 “ turally too much inclined to the earth, in gross supersti-
 “ tion, leading them to rest in the exhibition of a corporeal
 “ object rather than in God himself.” CALVIN’S Institutes.
 Book iv. C. xiv. § 14.

being no other than the regeneration of the individual, his confirmation in faith, and the repair of the soul's condition. "That saving grace," says Hooker, "which Christ originally is, or hath
 "for the general good of his whole Church, by
 "Sacraments he severally deriveth into every
 "member thereof. Sacraments serve as the
 "instruments of God, to that end and purpose."
 Again he affirms, that while "all receive not the
 "grace of God which receive the Sacraments
 "of his grace, neither is it ordinarily his will
 "to bestow the grace of Sacraments on any but
 "by the Sacraments. Each Sacrament having
 "both that (grace) which is general or common,
 "and that also which is peculiar unto itself, we
 "may hereby gather, that the participation of
 "Christ, which properly belongeth to any one
 "Sacrament, is not otherwise to be obtained
 "but by the Sacrament whereunto it is pro-
 "per."*

* B. v. § 57.

What, then, is the nature of this gracious influence, this ineffable something, imparted from the Divine Spirit, by means of human agency, to the soul, to which these mysterious expressions refer us? What is the subject of this Sacramental grace,—the recipient faculty, or the active powers? Does it operate a physical change, or one of a moral nature? And are the Sacraments positive means, or only prescribed conditions of the effect? Upon these

points, that which could alone satisfy our inquiries, is silent. The Scriptures contain no allusion to any other species of Divine grace than that which illuminates the conscience, which changes the tendencies of the heart, which gives birth to living acts of faith and devout affection, or, in its lowest degrees, restrains from sin. The immediate subject of this Grace, is the spirit of man, upon which the Divine Spirit impresses the law of a new nature, the image of his own perfections, rendering it capable of acts both of apprehension and desire, in reference to spiritual objects, for which it had become through sin disqualified. Inscrutable as is the *mode* in which the Divine and blessed Agent influences the mind in the great work of regeneration, (and equally inscrutable are the phenomena of nature as to the mode of their operation,) no mystery attends the effect, but such as superstition has itself originated.

There is no difficulty in understanding the nature of that change which we witness taking place in the disposition, the views, and the moral habits of the individual; no difficulty in referring this change to its only adequate cause, the operation of the Divine Spirit upon his rational faculties, in the way of communicated light and impulse. The effect of human knowledge upon the intellect, in developing its latent capacities, is not less mysterious than the effect

of Divine illumination in giving birth to the principle of faith; and impulses are often received from human objects of hope, affection, or imitation, which, in a manner equally inexplicable, excite and control the powers of the mind, so as to make the individual in some cases assume an external character absolutely different from his former self. What can be more astonishing than the power which one human spirit is capable of exerting over many others; the seemingly absolute power with which, by mere force of intellectual energy, one mind can so dominate over the wills, and rule the passions, and concentrate in itself the confidence and expectations, of a thousand tributary minds, as to secure their consentaneous action in subservience to its own purpose? Even in the more familiar operations of social sympathy, by means of which the action of one mind is propagated to another in a way that may be considered as analogous to the laws of musical unison, producing feelings of corresponding depression or elevation, how much is there that we are at a loss to explain! And yet, that spirit should thus act upon spirit, without the aid of any sensible cause, sometimes without the medium of language, is not more strange than that spirit should be acted upon and blend with matter, and that it should be identified in reciprocation the most intimate

with a material form. Does it then enhance the mystery, that the human spirit is thus acted upon by an Infinite Spirit, by the Spirit its Creator, to whom all its secret springs are known, its inmost recesses of thought accessible? Does either the certainty or the secrecy of the resistless operations of Divine grace, or the extent and permanence of the change which they superinduce on the disordered faculties of man, render the fact, as such, more mysterious? Does the degree of power exerted on the moral agent, affect the question, when, at its highest degree, no violence is done to his rational faculties, inasmuch as his will, although entirely passive, as respects the cause of the change, concurs in the effect, and is by the very change set free? Or is the nature of Divine communications involved in the more obscurity, because their uniform tendency is to make holy, to convert the heart from the love of sin, and to awake a sense of objects and interests remote from the experience of the carnal mind? Because in these respects they infinitely differ from the effects of human influence, does any greater difficulty attend the subject? The difficulty, the impenetrable mystery, are created by the hypothesis of a grace imparted to the human soul, which has no such efficacy, which has no perceptible effect in enlightening, or strengthening, or sanctifying the spiritual principle,—the very purpose of which

is referred to possibilities and future contingencies ; as is the case with regard to the supposed grace of the Sacraments. No one will deny that the Almighty may be pleased to communicate his grace at the precise time that the outward sign is administered ; that a spiritual change may pass upon the infant soul at the moment of its baptism ; that moral strength may be infused into the mind at the moment that the bishop places his hands on the candidate for confirmation ; that the pardon of transgression may be bestowed at the moment that the Absolution in the Visitation Service is pronounced by “ the Priest.” But what Scripture warrant have we for such an expectation? Where is the promise which so connects the sovereign bestowment of Divine favour with these performances, as to justify the representation that the rite of Baptism or that of the Lord’s Supper, to say nothing of apocryphal institutions, was designed to be a visible and certain sign of grace “ delivered into our “ hands,” as the effect of the ordinance? Is there a single passage of Scripture,—is there any thing analogous in the Divine proceedings, which warrants the presumption? Are spiritual blessings in the New Covenant suspended on any other conditions than the sense of need and the prayer of faith, or can any thing else be regarded as the means of obtaining them? How

infinitely derogatory, then, is it to the Divine Majesty and Goodness, to imagine that the dispensation of His saving favour is entrusted to the authority and caprice of erring men!*

If the phrase—*means of grace*, has any propriety, (which, rightly understood, it must be allowed to have,) it must relate to the moral influence of Christian institutions, in exciting those dispositions of heart to which the promises of grace relate, and in calling into exercise the principles of the regenerate nature. In this sense, the character of means pre-eminently attaches to prayer. Prayer is a revealed condition of promised blessings; prayer is the

* A person in Deacon's orders, may baptize, (even lay-baptism, indeed, is valid,) may preach by license, and may assist at the communion; but he must be in *Priest's* orders, to consecrate the elements, or to read the Absolution in the Office for visiting the sick. Bishops alone can, by imposition of hands, convey the Holy Ghost! Is there nothing of Popery in these distinctions? Bishop HORSLEY expressly claims the power of remitting sins as appertaining to the *Christian priesthood*. (Sermons, vol. I. p. 286) LAW maintains, that the imposition of hands, attended with God's grace and pardon, is an Institution of His, as much as the Sacraments, to last to the end of time. Bishop BURNET, in reply, stigmatizes the doctrine of human Absolution, as contrary to the nature and attributes of God, and as having no foundation in Scripture. "If Christ instituted Absolution, as well as the Sacraments, why is not Absolution ranked among the Sacraments and institutions of Christ, and why such anger against the Papists for calling it so?"

very medium of that heavenly communion which brings life, and strength, and peace into the soul; prayer, the prayer of faith, is “a sure and
“effectual sign of grace in us and of God’s good
“will towards us, by the which he doth really
“work invisibly in the soul:” it is the very first motion of incipient life in the regenerate; it is the daily Sacrament and oath of the devoted Christian. That holy word also, which is represented as the instrument of regeneration, and by which the man of God is perfected,—more especially that preached word which is still the ordinary means of calling and converting the sinner, and of building up the Church of God, is worthy to be styled with emphasis a means of grace. The way in which it becomes effective as such, is strictly conformable to the rational nature of man; nevertheless, its efficiency must be resolved altogether into supernatural agency. It is, as Hooker affirms respecting the Sacraments, “a moral instrument, the use whereof is in our hands, the
“effect in his: for the use we have his express
“commandment; for the effect his conditional
“promise.” It is under the preaching of the Gospel, that the grace of repentance is ordinarily bestowed. “Faith cometh by hearing.” It is in this blessed ordinance that the Divine Spirit is pleased to reveal himself as a Teacher, and to convince the conscience of sin, of righte-

ousness, and of judgement. Yet, we never hear of a grace analogous to “Sacramental grace,” attaching to the outward sign of preaching, or *dispensed* by the minister of the word. Attendance upon this ordinance is never spoken of as a condition—a “means effectual” of our being introduced into a state of grace, or of our receiving that “grace available unto eternal life,” which Gospel-instruction might be said to “signify.” The reason is obvious: the phraseology employed in speaking of the Sacraments, has descended to us from a Church in which preaching the Gospel was a duty held in no such high estimation; and in proportion as the Sacraments have been magnified by superstition, into charms of strange and wondrous potency, preaching has uniformly been depreciated, and after being divested of its true character, as the ordinance of God, has been suffered to sink into disuse. “Wherefore,” says Calvin on this subject, “let us abide by this conclusion: that the office of the Sacraments, is precisely the same as that of the word of God; which is to offer and present Christ to us, and in him the treasures of his heavenly grace.”* “The first object of them,” as he has before shewn, “is to assist our faith towards God; the second to testify our confession before men.”† But, as regards their efficacy, and designed operation, “the only office assigned

* *Institutes*,
B. iv. C. xiv.
§ 17.

† § 13.

“ to them by God, is, ” he remarks, “ to testify
 “ and confirm his benevolence towards us; nor
 “ do they impart any benefit, unless they are ac-
 “ companied by the Holy Spirit to open our
 “ minds and hearts, and render us capable of
 “ receiving this testimony: they communicate
 “ no grace from themselves, but announce and
 “ shew, and, as earnest and pledges, ratify
 “ the things which are given to us by the good-
 “ ness of God.” *

* § 17.

But why should we speak of the Sacraments, and not rather proceed at once to the consideration of the only two institutions professedly included under this general term? One would have thought that there was scarcely occasion for a term of art for the purpose of classifying together two such simple and different ordinances as Baptism and the Lord's Supper. But Sacraments, when the word was first coined, were held to be much more numerous; hence arose the expediency of framing some generic definition of obscure meaning, which might comprehend all that the people were taught to esteem as means and channels of grace. Under this verbal disguise, Baptism and Confirmation, Penance and Marriage, Holy Orders, Extreme Unction, and the Eucharist, were all made to pass for *mysteries* of equal sanctity, the signs of that invisible grace of which the Romish Priesthood claimed to be the depositary. Protestants

have reason to be jealous of a word which, in the hands of the Romanists, has wrought so much mischief, the theological character of which is so ambiguous, and which has still the effect in the minds of many persons, of throwing an obscurity around the nature of Divine institutions. What Sacraments are, or are not, is a point which is hardly worth the pains of determining;* for to what purpose is the word restricted in its application, if the things which once went by this name, are under any form retained? What does it signify being Protestants merely in our phraseology? Discarding, then, this word altogether, let us endeavour to ascertain the Scriptural import, first, of Baptism, and, secondly, of the Eucharist.

§ 7. When we consider with what ill-directed zeal and unholy animosity the controversies respecting Baptism, which have agitated the Church from age to age, have too generally been conducted, it would seem to be cause for thankfulness that the Divine Head of the Church, foreseeing the abuse which would be made of every thing external in religion, insti-

True import
of Baptism
as a rite.

* No word, as used by ecclesiastical writers, is of a more loose signification. Cyprian terms Confirmation, a Sacrament: he speaks also of the Sacrament of the Lord's Prayer!! (See PIERCE'S *Vindication*, p. 467.) "In a general acceptance, the name of a Sacrament may be attributed to any thing, whereby a holy thing is signified." HOMILY 9. B. ii.

tuted no more than two rites, and those of so entire simplicity, as to confine the corrupt inventions of man within the narrowest possible limits. Already even in the Apostolic Age, had the rite of Baptism been converted into an instrument of party, so as to draw from St. Paul the strong language of that declaration: "I thank God that I baptized none of you save Crispus and Gaius, lest any should say I had baptized in mine own name. For Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the Gospel." How ill do these words accord with the extravagant notions which have been maintained with regard to this ordinance as forming a chief purpose of the Christian ministry! Would the Apostle have expressed himself thus, if by baptizing he could have regenerated those to whom he was sent, or have had the satisfaction of delivering into the hands of whosoever partook of that *Sacrament*, a "grace available unto eternal life?" His views of the efficacy of this rite, must assuredly have been very different from those of modern divines, who seem so much more deeply initiated into the mysteries of the Christian *priesthood!*

Its symboli-
cal meaning.

In endeavouring to ascertain the genuine character of the ordinance of Baptism, the first point which is to be examined, is, the *symbolical* meaning of the rite itself. This part of

the subject is involved in the same obscurity as envelops the origin of Baptism, than which nothing has been by men of learning and ingenuity, more “diversely interpreted and “disputed of.” One has deduced it from the deluge; another has discovered its origin in heathen customs; while by some, it has been derived from the ceremonial purifications of the Levitical Law. Significant actions are found to prevail among all nations in the infancy of language and of society. They are a species of metaphorical expression, quite in unison with that highly figurative, analogical dialect, which characterises the rude literature of a half-civilized people. Having their origin in the familiar customs of the times, their meaning could not at first be mistaken; they were the most intelligible and impressive signs of thought; but when, in the lapse of time, the customs from which the language and action of metaphor were taken, have become obsolete, a difficulty may easily arise in ascertaining their precise force and primitive meaning. This will apply to those religious rites and ceremonial actions, which, though of Divine institution, were, no doubt, adapted to the customs of the age and country in which they originated, and had, distinct from their ultimate spiritual design, an obvious conventional meaning. Baptismal rites of some kind or other, are among

the most ancient and prevailing of these significant actions, but it does not appear that they had by any means a uniform or common signification. Under the Law, there were, as the Apostle speaks, "divers baptisms." Ablutions constituted one species of ceremonial purification, and were no doubt designed to impress the Israelites with the necessity of moral cleanliness. These washings were, however, in most cases, performed by the individual; not administered, like the Baptismal rite, by another. To this remark, there occurs a very striking exception in the case of "the water of separation" made of the ashes of a red heifer, which is expressly termed "a purification for sin:" this was to be sprinkled by a clean person upon the unclean, after which, both the administrator and the subject of the rite, were to bathe themselves in water and to wash their clothes, and were both considered as unclean until the evening.* But between this rite, as well as the other baptisms, and the Baptism of the New Testament, there is this essential dif-

Heb. ix. 10.

Numbers
xix. 19.

* From this remarkable rite, the author of "Facts and Evidences on the Subject of Baptism," argues in support of his view of Christian Baptism, (to which he considers it as bearing an analogical reference,) as consisting of a two-fold act: "1, immersion, or the washing of the person, signifying death unto sin; and 2, the pouring of water, signifying consecration into a renewed life."

ference, that the former was enjoined as a frequent or occasional observance, the latter is represented as an initiatory rite, the iteration of which would be at once unmeaning and improper. This use of Baptism, as a rite of proselytism, existed, according to Jewish writers,* prior to the era of the Baptist: this notion receives some countenance from the incidental manner in which the rite is first mentioned by the Evangelist Matthew, which is very different from what one would have expected to find in the case of the institution of a novel ceremony among a people peculiarly jealous of innovation. The Baptism of John was nevertheless of a peculiar and distinctive character: he came preaching the baptism of repentance "for the remission of sins;" a feature in his commission which essentially distinguished his administration of the rite from any prior use of it either in the Jewish ritual, or among Heathen nations. They who came to him, "were baptized in Jordan, confessing their sins." That the rite or action of Baptism was symbolical either of repentance or of the remission of transgression, by no means follows from this being the distinguishing doctrine of his preaching. The Jewish washings had certainly no such significance; they were

* V. in confirmation of the assertion of Maimonides, a remarkable passage from Epictetus, cited in "Facts and Evidences," p. 59.

typical of moral cleanliness, but the only instance in which the affusion of water was employed as an expiatory rite, is that in which the whole efficacy was derived from the ashes of the sacrificed heifer. The occasions on which the ceremonial purifications of the Law became requisite, were not such as immediately called for repentance; they frequently related to involuntary extrinsic pollution. The Baptism of John, on the contrary, was designed to signify a moral change, a total cleansing, of permanent virtue, and the true idea of the figure, seems to be, *the purifying influence of his doctrine upon the mind*. It was as “a teacher “sent from God,” that he baptized, and that the Jews, who became his disciples, recognised his authority; “for they all esteemed John to “be a prophet.” In what other sense could, more especially, the Jews, (who, as a nation were well accustomed to distinguish between ceremonial pollution and moral transgression as requiring a kind of expiation so essentially different,) understand the Baptist as cleansing them from their sins by the symbolical effusion of water, than that of the moral tendency of his teaching to produce a state of heart of correspondent purity? His doctrine was, “Repent, “for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;” but, had he represented the remission of sins as actually consequent upon repentance, his con-

duct would not only have been in contradiction to the language of the Levitical institutions, which uniformly testified that “without shedding of blood there is no remission,” but would have been ill-adapted “to prepare the way of the Lord.” To every expiatory rite there belonged a victim: in Baptism there was none. A victim was indeed at hand, to whom, when subsequently manifested to him by the miraculous token, John bore his testimony: “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world!” The Baptism of John had, however, no ritual connexion with the atonement of Christ. He spoke of the Messiah who was to come; but ill prepared were his hearers to understand that “Christ ought to suffer,” or to recognise their Saviour in the form of a sacrifice. The Levitical ordinances of expiation were not yet abrogated: it is therefore incredible, that John should permit his disciples to believe that by their merely submitting to the ritual cleansing which he administered, their sins would be remitted or washed away; but the fruits of his doctrine were such as might well justify the strongly metaphorical representation of its making them clean. Lest, indeed, they should fall into the mistake of imagining there was any virtue in their submitting to the rite, he insists on its true meaning as involving

an obligation to “bring forth fruits meet for repentance.”

It is important to bear in mind that Baptism, the Baptism of the New Testament, is not, strictly speaking, the act of the subject, who is the passive recipient of the ordinance, but of the administrator; that, consequently, to impute to it any moral efficacy as a rite, is to ascribe to the latter as the real agent, the power of dispensing whatsoever benefits it is supposed to convey. We may be sure that the Forerunner of our Lord would cautiously abstain from the seeming assumption of any such prerogative with regard to the remission of sins. He baptized simply as an instructor into the doctrine of forgiveness, preparatory to the revelation of the Messiah whom he was sent to announce, as immediately at hand. And when that Divine Person was made known to him on the occasion of his coming to submit to Baptism as a part of that “righteousness” which, as a Jew “made under the Law,” it became him to fulfil, “I have need,” said the Baptist, “to be baptized by thee, and comest thou to me?” In this act, the Master humbled himself to become the disciple of his servant, but fully conscious was that servant, that he had in such a case nothing to teach: the teacher rather stood himself in need of being instructed. Had the sym-

bolical import of Baptism been the washing away of sin, it would be difficult to account for our Lord's submitting to the ordinance.

Immediately after passing under the rite of discipleship, on which occasion he received the miraculous attestation of his being the Son of God, our Lord began to exercise his public ministry as a Teacher,* and in that capacity, by the instrumentality of his disciples, to baptize; yet, as it should seem, with considerable reserve, until the period at which the public career of John was terminated by his imprisonment. But now, the conditions of discipleship were no longer limited to the profession of repentance, although to call sinners to repentance, was still a grand purpose of our Lord's ministry; it was necessary for those who came to Jesus, not only to recognise him, as John had been readily received, in the character of a prophet, but to believe that he was the predicted Christ, to whom John bore witness. Hence, the necessity of belief as well as of repentance; hence, our Lord's inquiry, "Whom say men that I am?" hence, his declaration,

* To his public coming, or his entrance into public life as a teacher, at his baptism, or to the miraculous attestation of his Messiahship which accompanied his baptism, is probably to be referred the declaration of the Apostle John: "This is he who came by water and by blood." v. MACKNIGHT on 1 John, v. 6.

“ If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die
“ in your sins:” “ He that believeth and is
“ baptized, shall be saved.” The rite of Bap-
tism was symbolically significant neither of be-
lief nor of repentance, but it continued to re-
present the designed effect of Divine instruction.
In the same sense, it seems the most natural to
understand the strongly figurative language of
our Lord’s conversation with Nicodemus, by
referring it to the regeneration of mind which a
proselyte underwent who really embraced the
doctrines into which he was baptized: the in-
fluence of his doctrine went not simply to
cleanse, but to renew; the reception of it intro-
duced the disciple into a new world, into a
sphere of discovery so enlarged, of light and
purity so transcendent, that the rite of initiation
might be said to constitute his entrance upon
a higher state of existence—his being “ born
“ again.” The rite being metonymically put
for the doctrine, (as elsewhere “ the baptism of
“ repentance” is employed to signify the doc-
trine of John,) the greatness of the moral change
is expressed in the declaration, that “ Except a
“ man be born of water and of the Spirit, he
“ cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” This
double regeneration seems to allude to the pre-
diction of John, that after himself who was
baptizing with water, should come ONE whom
he described as baptizing with the Spirit,—a

teacher of still higher pretensions, who would have power to confer that light and grace, as being himself THE LIGHT, which the rite he administered, only typified. Our Lord intimates to Nicodemus, that he must become his disciple as well as John's,—be born of the Spirit as well as of water, by receiving his doctrine also, in order to enter into that new dispensation which he announced to him under the phrase—the Kingdom of God.

In adopting this rite as the emblematic sign which his Apostles were directed to employ in discipleing the nations, our Lord at once affixed his sanction to the doctrines of John, and, while he held forth in language palpable and familiar, the purity of character required in all his followers, taught them by the rite itself to expect and desire that higher kind of effusion—that spiritual baptism, which John had predicted as the distinguishing characteristic of the dispensation about to commence. Accordingly, after our Lord's ascension, we find an established although not a necessary connexion, between the rite of discipleship and the gift of the Holy Ghost,—the ritual and the miraculous baptism; the disciple being thus immediately capacitated to become a teacher. The believing reception of the doctrine of the Apostles, having given birth to a moral change, of which Baptism was at that

Connexion
between
Baptism and
the gift of
the Spirit.

early period not less an evident token than an emblem, all that remained was to endue the convert with those spiritual gifts by which he might be qualified to spread the knowledge of Christ. This was the sole purpose of the miraculous endowments which attended the first promulgation of the Gospel; for it is of the highest importance to bear in mind, that what was communicated by the Apostles, was purely of the nature of supernatural intellectual endowment. Grace, (understanding by that term, moral influence,) the imposition of their hands could no more impart to the soul, than John could by the rite of Baptism bestow pardon. The ceremony of Confirmation, however, originally performed immediately after Baptism, and still regarded as supplemental to it, rests entirely upon this supposed Apostolic precedent. In defence of its continuance as a modern practice, it is urged, that “ though the extraordinary gifts of the blessed Spirit have
“ ceased, yet the ordinary influences of his
“ grace are still granted, and are as necessary
“ now to the purposes of sanctification, as in
“ the first ages of the Church.” The Apostle Paul is imagined to allude to the continuance of the rite, “ as an ordinary means of strengthening the faith of Christians, by joining it
“ with Baptism, and describing both as among
“ the first principles of the oracles of God.

“ Heb. vi. 1, 2.”* Many of the Fathers, as has been already noticed, entertained similar notions. But, without entering particularly into the disputed import of this text, which is susceptible of considerable diversity of interpretation, and might certainly be as plausibly supposed to refer to Ordination, or to Absolution, as to Confirmation, it is sufficient to remark, that the ordinary influences of Divine grace were never bestowed by the laying on of hands, that the rite had no reference to sanctification, and that the Apostles themselves had no pretensions to such a power as is, on this hypothesis, ascribed to the uninspired rulers of an Establishment. As a means of strengthening the faith of Christians, otherwise than as being the sign of the conveyance of miraculous attestations of Christianity, it never had any significance or efficacy; this misapplication of the rite, and its fabulous virtue, are of the same class of errors as the expiatory efficacy of Baptism, and Transubstantiation, both of which originated in a similar gross misinterpretation of the language of Scripture.

If the preceding view of the emblematic design of the rite of Baptism have any pretensions to accuracy, the precise mode of admi-

Mode of
Baptism.

* “ A plain and affectionate Address to young Persons to
“ be confirmed.” By Daniel Wilson, M. A. 3d edition.

nistering it, would seem to be a point of small importance. Admitting that it consists in the copious application of water by the administrator to the subject of the rite, as significant of the cleansing efficacy of the Christian doctrine, it surely can matter little how that washing is performed, provided it be not *auto-baptism*. The reasons in favour of affusion are briefly these: that as consisting in the application of water to the subject, it is difficult to conceive how that could be literally performed by immersion; that some at least of the Levitical ablutions were performed by affusion; that instruction, to which Baptism has been shewn primarily to relate, is, by a familiar metaphor, represented as being poured out; and finally, the comparison intimated between baptizing with water and baptizing with the Holy Ghost, would lead us to suppose that the performance of the rite consisted in an effusion of water, corresponding to the language in which the Holy Ghost is described as being poured out "from on high." To these considerations may be added, a presumptive argument derived from the use of the term anointing or unction, in reference to the miraculous Baptism.

Its moral
significance.

My purpose is not controversial, but to ascertain, as far as practicable, the genuine import of the rite, as distinct from the artificial analogies which subsequently became connected

with it, when Baptism had assumed a secondary or ecclesiastical meaning. As symbolical of moral purity or cleansing, any mode of administering it, might seem to be of equal significance; but that of immersion appears to me to be less appropriate to its specific import, and to be at the same time more likely to countenance the superstitious notion of its efficacy as washing away sin. When Baptism, as a Christian ordinance, became identified with the reception of the Gospel, the transition of which in the adult convert it was the sign and attestation, would naturally come to be spoken of as taking place *at* Baptism, and the simple meaning of the rite would be merged in its moral significance as an initiation into the Christian discipleship. So great was the change, that it might be justly represented as a passing from death into life, and fanciful analogies would then begin to be discovered between the rite as an emblem and the moral action, which were far from entering into its original meaning. When proselytes were made to the Jewish religion, it was customary to speak of the change as a regeneration, and this notion was carried to the extent of considering it as annulling all previous ties in the same manner as would be affected by an actual dying and resurrection. These ideas the converts to Christianity from Judaism, carried with them respecting the ordi-

nance of initiation, and by a process of association the most natural, Baptism was at length held to be emblematic of that of which it was, properly considered, only morally significant: one step further, and what it was designed to represent, it was esteemed adequate to confer.

Comparison
to Burial.

The phrase "Buried in Baptism," which occurs twice in the writings of St. Paul, has been, according to ancient opinion, understood as deriving all its propriety from some resemblance between the mode of washing and interment.

V. Tertul-
lian.

The custom of trine Baptism, by some explained as having reference to the doctrine of the Trinity, is represented by Athanasius and Augustin as answering to the three days during which our Saviour lay in the grave. Such conceits are frequent enough in the writings of the Fathers: this is one which shews how easy it is to invent fanciful reasons for a practice, very remote from the original intent. As to the supposed analogy between the rite of Baptism and Burial, it may admit of a question, whether the simile gave rise to the mode or the mode to the simile. The simile evidently founds itself on the sound of the Apostle's words; but it must be recollected, that whatever was the mode of baptizing, the believer who embraced the doctrine of salvation by being baptized into Christ, as really died to the present world, was as really buried in a spiritual sense, as really rose to newness of life, on the

supposition that the rite had no such emblematic force, as on the admission that it had. The fact did not in the least depend on the rite, neither did the moral significance of the initiatory ordinance consist in its symbolical meaning. Now, as to whether the Apostle had any reference to the mode, let it be considered, that our Saviour was not, in our sense of the word, interred at all; the grave in which his body was laid ready for embalment, was hewn out of the rock, and was probably not below the level, certainly not beneath the surface of the earth. Between the circumstance of interment in any case, and the ceremony of immersion, the points of contrast are, to say the least, full as striking as those of resemblance: the former is an action in which the person is alike passive and unconscious, the latter one to which he himself contributes not only the expression of his assent, but some part at least of the performance; the one is a final disposal of the subject, the other a momentary situation; the one a penal circumstance, the other introductory to a state of privilege. But let the Apostle's phraseology be understood as expressing the spiritual participation in the burial and resurrection of Christ, which belongs to the character of those who have been baptized into Christ, in the same sense as those whom he addressed had also been "circumcised in him with the circumcision

“made without hands, putting off the body of
 “the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of
 “Christ;” the whole harmony of the passage
 is preserved, and its meaning, relieved from
 this forced and remote analogy, is then unequi-
 vocal.

The Fathers perpetually speak of Baptism as
a regeneration: they also bestow on the rite, the
 term *illumination*, besides several others, ap-
 plicable indeed to the moral effect of the Christ-
 ian doctrine, and therefore, in a sense, appro-
 priate to the rite of discipleship; but will any
 one contend, that either the affusion or immer-
 sion of water is symbolical of the operation of
 light? It was a property of the miraculous ef-
 fusion of the Spirit, to illuminate the mind; this
 was a baptism of illumination; but such ex-
 pressions prove nothing either as to the mode
 or the emblematic meaning of the original rite.

Import of
 the phrase
 to baptize in
 the name.

Leaving then this part of the subject, the
 next point to be illustrated, is, what the being
 baptized in the name of Christ was designed to
 express on the part of the convert. There can
 be no doubt, in the first place, that it was a
 mark of discipleship. The language of St.
 Paul, before cited, “I thank God, I baptized
 “none of you, save Crispus and Gaius, lest any
 “should say I had baptized in my own name,”
 indicates, that to baptize in the name of any
 one, was familiarly significant of proselyting to

his doctrines and authority as the founder of the sect. To profess to belong to the school of Paul, or of Apollos, or of Cephas, was inconsistent with not having been baptized in either of those names, as the name of their head. Christianity is a sect which knows of but one Master; the Apostle's appeal was, therefore, extremely forcible: "Is Christ divided? Were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" When our Lord was upon earth, he baptized, it is said, at one period, more disciples than John: that is, he disciplined more; for as to the administration of the rite, "Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples" in his name, as John's disciples most probably baptized in their Master's name. The few individuals whom Paul baptized, he would be careful to have it understood that he baptized in the name of Christ; but knowing the proneness of these Corinthians to divide the church into parties, he would not so much as administer the rite of discipleship, lest those whom he baptized should, from that circumstance, be mistaken for his followers, instead of those of their common Master. Far was it from being any part of his mission, and not less abhorrent from his purpose, to become the founder of a school; he was sent, "not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel."

It is clear that the expression, to baptize in the name of a person, could not relate to the

Acts viii.
16; xiv. 5.

use of that name in the ritual formula, because in that sense, Paul could never have had ground for the slightest apprehension that it should be said, he used his own name in baptizing. It has been sometimes treated as a difficulty, that in the various accounts contained in the Acts of the Apostles, of the Baptism of converts, no mention occurs of the formula so expressly enjoined by our Lord, having been used by the Apostles; but they are described, in more than one instance, as having “baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” According to the view now taken of the import of the phrase, the difficulty vanishes: it relates not to a form of words, but to the distinguishing character of the Christian discipleship, and to the authority under which the Apostles baptized. In the Epistle to the Corinthians, the Israelites are said to have been all “baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea:” this, I apprehend, intends, in like manner, nothing more than that they became on that occasion enlisted, as it were, into his discipleship. The sacred writer is running a parallel between the circumstances of the Jewish Church and those of the early Christians: the whole body partook, he is shewing, in both cases, of the same external privileges; the whole of the Israelitish camp were disciplined to Moses, as the Corinthians had all been baptized unto Christ;

the former did all eat of the manna, as the latter had alike eaten of the bread of his flesh; and the one had all drunk of the waters miraculously produced from the rock, as the other body had drunk the blood of Him of whom that rock was an expressive emblem: nevertheless, the majority of those Israelites fell short of Canaan, and perished in the wilderness, and thus might these professed Christians, in the midst of their fancied security, “stumble and fall”: external privileges could in themselves avail them nothing. The passage contains the most emphatic reproof of those who, at that early period of the Church, were manifesting a disposition to place a superstitious reliance upon the ritual parts of Christianity. The phrase “Baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea”—has not, as Schleusner has remarked, any allusion to the mode of Baptism, but refers to the period or occasion on which the Israelites may be considered as having publicly recognised Moses as their prophet and leader.*

* “Ex omnibus his locis (1 Cor. xii. 13; Rom. vi. 3, &c.) satis superque apparet formulam: βαπτισθῆναι εἰς ὄνομα τινος significare in universum: *se nomini alicujus doctrinæ, institutioni, auctoritati addictum profiteri per baptismi ritum*, unde illustrari potest locus (1 Cor. x. 2) ubi Israelitæ, qui Mose duce ex, Ægypto exierant dicuntur πάντες εἰς τὸν μωσῆν ἐβαπτισαντο ἐν τῇ νεφέλῃ καὶ τῇ θαλάσῃ, h.e. omnes

Import of
the Formu-
la.

The tenor of the commission which our Lord gave his disciples to proselyte all nations, constituted it the essential peculiarity of Christian baptism, that they should baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Whether this direction implies the form of words to be used at the administration of the rite or not, is immaterial, as the use of the formula, if not obligatory, must at least be regarded as in the highest degree expedient. The doctrinal import of the passage is, on either supposition, equally unequivocal, as attesting the proper Deity of their ascending Master, and the distinctive character of the Christian proselytism. Becoming the disciple of Jesus Christ, was thus shewn to be an act essentially different from that of embracing the tenets of a self-erected sect. The belief which the Baptismal confession expressed, was, that Jesus is the Son of God: it related to his Divine character; it involved the recognition of the only true God, the Jehovah, as manifested by the clearer discoveries of the new dispensation; it was an act of religious obedience, of self-consecration, and of faith. It is in this view, that Christian Baptism bears an analogy to the or-

se professos esse sectatores Mosis ducis et imperatoris, cum nubem illam et Mosen ducem sequerentur per mare rubrum. Coll. 1 Cor. i. 13. 15." SCHLEUSNER'S *Lexicon*.

dinance of Circumcision, which was not less a rite of discipleship. The faith required of the Christian convert, had respect not merely to the truth of the doctrines which were to be received, but to the blessings of the New Covenant. The great blessing of the Gospel is, the remission of sins: this is what the Apostles were charged to preach in the name of Christ, “among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem;” this, accordingly, is the blessing which they hold out as “THE PROMISE,” made to the Jews and to their children, “and to all that are afar off,” when they exhort them to repent and be baptized in the name of the Saviour. Now, since “none can forgive sins but God only,” an acceptance of Jesus Christ in his Divine character as a Saviour, as well as in that of a Teacher,—a belief, in other words, in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, was essential to the being baptized in the name of Christ for the remission of sins.

The being baptized in the name of Christ, was an act which involved the confession of that name before men. It was an enlisting into the Church, a putting on of Christ; it was to assume the badge of profession, to take the oath of warfare. As connected with a public renunciation of previous habits and opinions, it formed, in some degree, a test and criterion of the change it signified. He that was bap-

Baptism
viewed as a
confession
of Christ.

tized, was not only baptized into the death of Christ, as the fundamental truth, the glorious reproach of the *new religion*, but was considered as buried with him in Baptism, as to the interests of the present world. This being the first, the initiatory step to be taken on the reception of Christianity, it was an expression of subjection to the authority of the Divine founder, and of faith in his resurrection, on which the Apostles would naturally insist as a sign of that conversion to which was annexed the promise of the remission of sins. An open confession of Christ, was, at that period, neither a vague nor an equivocal act. Attended as it generally was, by reproach, and even danger, it afforded a presumptive evidence of religious sincerity, and the rite of Baptism, as the symbol of discipleship, reflected a lustre on the character of the proselyte. In times of persecution, the act of joining the Christian Society, bore a resemblance to filling up the ranks in battle by stepping forward in the place of those who had fallen; it was being baptized, as it were, upon the dead.* Hence, in part, arose those extravagant notions which soon began to prevail with regard to the efficacy of the rite. To all the external rites and symbols of Christianity, so long as that confession was, in the estimation of the world, ignominious, a more than adequate—a romantic importance was naturally attached in the

* 1 Cor. xv.
29. V. DOD-
DRIDGE.

Christian Church: and these ideas would last, after that the signs of profession had ceased to be a certain expression of character, and when their original import had become obscured. In proportion to the obscurity which began to rest upon them, when the growth of superstition had led to their being regarded as mysteries, they became susceptible of an indefinite meaning, and acquired the property of acting with all the force of indefiniteness upon the imagination. Then were called in detached passages of Scripture, which, in their literal sense, might appear to justify this exaggerated estimate of the outward symbol. Such has been the history of the rite of Baptism. As if it did not save the Christian "*by figure*" merely,—as if, contrary to the declaration of the Apostle Peter, the washing of the flesh could avail, rather than the purification of the conscience, Baptism has been exalted into a standing miracle of ineffable mystery, to which the burning bush, the brazen serpent, and the pool of Bethesda, presented apt, but imperfect analogies. Baptism! it can regenerate, illuminate, justify, wash away the stain of original sin, and the guilt of personal transgression; nay, as duly administered, it does necessarily effect all this; to crown all, it is in Baptism, when performed by the Episcopally ordained, that the soul of the infant

HOOKE, B. v. § 57.

becomes immortal, which must otherwise perish !*

But to return : the act of being baptized may, it must be allowed, under different circumstances of the Christian profession, involve much more and much less than it intrinsically implies. It may involve a transition more or less marked according to the previous condition of the proselyte ; it may involve a renunciation of the world, a resolute embracing of the faith of Christ in the face of persecution, and so constitute a test, a credible evidence of obedience. In the present day it is attended by no such consequences ; it is no longer either a mark of reproach, or a criterion of discipleship. The meaning of the rite and its obligation, remain essentially the same ; but it has necessarily ceased to be an expression of character. The life of the primitive Christian was a continual confession of Christ before men. His Baptism was, except as being the first, the least distinguishing and important of that series of religious actions which subjected the believer to the reproach of the Cross. It was a solitary act, not unfrequently a private transaction ; it left behind no visible trace : as a sign of pro-

* The dogma gravely maintained by the celebrated Dodwell.

fession, it was not broad and palpable enough to allow of this being regarded as its designed import; nor had it any immediate reference to the social or collective form in which that profession was to be exhibited.

It has been too readily taken for granted by some writers on this subject, that Baptism, being an initiatory rite, must have a necessary connexion with an admission into the Visible Church. Let it be recollected, that as a rite of proselytism, it was practised, at all events by the Forerunner of our Lord, when it could not form a sign of initiation into the Visible Church; for the only church then in existence was the Jewish Church, the initial ordinance of which, was not Baptism but Circumcision. What now claims to be considered as the Visible Church, is made up of distinct associations of believers, into which an individual is admitted, upon terms very different from the mere circumstance of his baptism. It is by his voluntary connexion with a particular society that he becomes a member of the Visible Church, and to that connexion Baptism, confessedly, does not refer; notwithstanding it may be deemed an essential pre-requisite. Baptism is the symbol of discipleship, not of brotherhood; the seal of a covenant made not with men but with God. In the primitive age, there could be little room for scrupling to receive

Baptism
does not ad-
mit to the
Visible
Church.

the baptized proselyte as a Christian, but his baptism was a duty irrespective of the Christian fellowship. It implied the reception of Christ. The convert was baptized into Christ, not into the Society of Christians. The privileges of religious communion followed his avowing himself a disciple, as a matter of course, but the benefits to which the ordinance was significant of his introduction, could result to him only from an individual interest in the Saviour's death.

This distinction, the importance of which is much greater than may at first sight be discerned, will become more evident on our taking into consideration the specific benefit which is attributed to the Christian Baptism. This, as has been already noticed, is the remission of sins. "Repent and be baptized," was the language of St. Peter, "every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the remission of sins: for the promise is unto you and to your children." The pardon of sin cannot be considered as in any sense suspended on an outward connexion with the Visible Church: this is among the very worst tenets of Popery. There are some ministers, indeed, of the Church of England, who do not blush or tremble to avow their belief, that whosoever does not receive the Sacraments from the hands of an episcopally ordained priest, is "left to the unco-

Acts ii. 38,
9.

“venanted mercies of God.”* With such men it would be useless to argue, but to those who reject with abhorrence this monstrous dogma, it may be suggested as deserving of consideration, how far the rite with which this promise is connected, can be appropriately represented as referring to a connexion with a Christian society. It is indeed impossible to account for the strong language which the sacred writers employ in speaking of the efficacy of the ordinance, otherwise than by understanding them to use it metonymically, for the moral act which it expressed—the embracing of the great blessing of the Gospel, forgiveness of sins through the propitiation of Christ. This blessing cannot be dispensed by man; this essential part of the salvation of the Gospel is not placed at the disposal of a priesthood; it can be conveyed no more by the administration of Baptism than by Absolution. Baptism, together with all which it is designed to imply, would be not less an individual’s duty, though there were no visible communion of saints in the world; but that it is in any sense a condition or an instrument of salvation, is a notion to be rejected with abhorrence. The only condition of forgiveness, is, the reception of Christ; the only instrument of salvation, is, faith in his name. Baptism expresses the act, and not its fruits, and the stress to be laid upon the rite, arises from its being an ordained ex-

*MANT’S
Academical
Sermons,
p. 223. See
also DAU-
BENY’S
Guide, &c.

pression of becoming the disciple of Christ. In this sense alone must that declaration be understood: "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." Many believe before they are baptized; many are baptized before they believe: in either case, the ordinance is equally expressive of that union to Christ by virtue of which we are saved. "It is then, in a word," to adopt the expression of the inestimable Leighton, "neither an empty sign to them that believe, nor an effectual cause of grace to them that believe not."

Commentary on 1 Peter iii. 21.

Infant Baptism.

Who then are the proper subjects of Christian Baptism? Those alone who believe? Assuredly, if the remission of sins, the great blessing of the Gospel, is absolutely suspended on the intelligent exercise of faith in Christ; if none are capable of participating in the benefits of his death, but those who can ask for pardon, and appreciate his salvation; if none are united to him, but such as have thus come to him. But this were to exclude not from Baptism merely, but from salvation, an innumerable multitude of ransomed ones who, though in Adam they were dead, are in Christ made alive; happy beings, who having never known sin but in its penalty, have yet received the Atonement; the grace of God and the gift by grace of a Saviour, having abounded above the offence of their first parent, to their justification. There is, we know,

a way in which little children may come to Christ; and as, while he was upon earth, they received his Divine benediction, so now, they may be made partakers of the blessings of his death. In this hope we present to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, our infant offspring, believing that although incapable of faith, they are not incapable of redemption; that although they cannot seek for themselves salvation, they stand in need of being saved; and that, even before reason is developed, their spirits may be made the subjects of that Divine Agency which shall counter-work the incipient actings of corruption, and fit them for the purposes of their Creator. We baptize them in the name of Christ, as proselytes which the great Master himself disdained not to admit into his school, regarding that rite as the pledge of instruction, and imploring the aids of the Heavenly Teacher that he may succeed our endeavours to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Visible Christians as yet they cannot be; nor are they to be regarded as initiated into the Visible Church: but their relation to that Church is of a sufficiently intelligible and determinate nature, as that of candidates already entered on the roll, catechumens training for admission, children of the promise.

The relative circumstances into which the children of the primitive Christians were intro-

duced, were, in many points of view, essentially different from those in which the offspring of the heathen were placed. There was a difference, in the first place, in their educational privileges; they were brought up in the school of Christ; they were taught from their infancy those Holy Scriptures which were adapted to make them wise unto Salvation; the advantage entailed upon them as Christians, was “much every way; since to them were committed the oracles of God.” As the children of proselytes, their circumstances were also different, inasmuch as they inherited the reproach of the Christian name, the glorious ignominy of the Cross, and they might on that ground seem to be entitled to the sign of discipleship. Their moral situation was moreover different in point of spiritual advantages of no ideal value; theirs were the prayers of the Church, and whatsoever blessings the faith of a parent may entail upon his offspring. To deny that the Almighty, in the sovereign bestowment of his grace, has respect to the intercessions of the faithful, so that some are blessed for the sake of others, would be to overlook one of the clearest laws of the Divine economy. There is, we know, an established connexion in the promises of God, which are the expressions of his will, between intercessory prayer and the good of those on whose behalf it is offered, corre-

sponding to that general law of his Providence, which implicates all human beings in a reciprocal influence and dependence. Finally, the children of believers were placed in a situation essentially peculiar, as having been dedicated to God, as being in this sense relatively “holy,” ^{1Cor.vii.14.} not by virtue of any fictitious ecclesiastical sanctity, but such as arose from the immediate spiritual relation of their parents to Jehovah, as his people, his priesthood, through faith in the Son of God. In this light, the New Testament assuredly authorizes our regarding the seed of the Church, the offspring of true believers; and although the blessings of the Baptismal promise, are not restricted to them, nor consequently the right to the ordinance, considered as the pledge of instruction and the sign of discipleship, inasmuch as the will of God, not the Divine purpose, must constitute our rule,—yet, with regard to them, the ordinance becomes susceptible of a peculiar interest, and acquires an emphatic importance.

§ 8. By Baptism, then, we are discipled to Christ; but visible members of his body we become by uniting ourselves in the open confession of his name, to some determinate portion of the Christian society; and not till then do we claim to be regarded in the light of Christian brethren. The communion of the Lord's Supper is, by general concurrence, restricted

The Lord's
Supper.

1 Cor. xi. 28.

to persons sustaining this character,* since they alone can be supposed to have fulfilled the Apostolic injunction: “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup,”—or to be capable of entering into the true spirit of this social rite, and of “discerning the Lord’s body.” The notion that children are made by Baptism members of the Visible Church, gave rise to the strange practice which obtained in the time of Cyprian, of administering this ordinance to children, in one remarkable instance of which upon record, the elements were forced down the infant’s throat.† The same notion has led to the rejection of Infant Baptism, on the ground of the infant’s incapacity for church-membership. Between the two ordinances, however, there exists no inherent and, certainly, no instituted connexion. The one is but the pledge and symbol of instruction; the other is the expression and the seal of faith, an oath of fidelity, and a bond of Christian fellowship. Submission to Baptism is an individual duty; the Lord’s Supper is a “communion of saints.”

*—“such as were baptized and received both the credentials and the practicals of Christianity.” JUSTIN MARTYR. Vide Lord KING’S Enquiry. Part Second.

† *Diaconusreluctanti licet de Sacramento calicis infudit.* CYPRIAN *De Lapsis.* Lord KING’S Enquiry, Part Second, p. 112.

The unbaptized have indeed been generally regarded as unfit to partake of the Eucharist, as they are also excluded from what is termed Christian burial. Hooker assigns as a reason for this, that "no dead thing is capable of nourishment," Baptism being, in his view, the door and entrance to spiritual life. But, according to the principles of the New Testament, the only proper ground of such an exclusion, must pertain to the religious character. Discipleship, in itself considered, would naturally seem to be a pre-requisite to brotherhood; in any other view, the two institutions have no closer or more necessary connexion with each other, than they have with any other Christian duties.

That the observance of the Lord's Supper is a duty, and that as a duty it ought chiefly to be regarded, is manifest from the Scriptural account of the institution. The mysterious obscurity which ancient superstition threw around this simple rite, from an affectation of the privacy observed by the Heathens in their nefarious mysteries,* as well as from false notions of its inherent

A positive
duty.

* *Piæ initiationes arceant profanos.* TERTULLIAN. The same Father, when the Pagans objected to the secrecy observed by the Christians in their mysteries, replies: "That it was the very nature of mysteries to be concealed, as Ceres's were in Samothracia!" Lord KING's Enquiry. Part Second, p. 106.

efficacy, has been the cause of obliterating to a considerable degree this its primitive character. Its value as a privilege, has been exalted at the expense of its claims to observance as an obligation; and a distinction has been established between attendants upon the other ordinances of Christianity and communicants in the Eucharist, as between novitiates and the initiated, which is both unscriptural and pernicious. Why Christians should regard as more optional, their obedience to this sacred institute than to any other, or imagine some peculiar qualifications requisite for performing this duty, which are not equally necessary for the due discharge of other religious duties, it would be difficult satisfactorily to explain. Nothing ought more emphatically to be deprecated, than a light unthinking participation of the symbols of our Lord's body. The Apostolic caution lest such persons should eat and drink condemnation to themselves, stands as a prominent inscription over the sacred Table, to deter the formalist and the profane: but are these the only classes of persons who abstain from approach? Are there not attached to every religious community, a number of individuals making respectable pretensions to religious character, whom some secret restraint or misapprehension has kept back altogether from this ordinance? Surely, whatever be the cause, it cannot justify their

reconciling themselves to the life-long neglect of a duty of positive obligation.

Among the Protestant Nonconformists, the ordinance is administered only to members of churches, and the precautions taken in the admission of members, have operated to produce this broad anti-Christian distinction between the congregation as an audience, and the communicants. If in the attempt to remedy this evil by a wider comprehension, the purity of Christian discipline must necessarily be sacrificed, the fearful alternative is one which would require us long to pause, before a stake should be taken up from the fence which forms the narrow enclosure. Any plans of comprehension, on the one hand, which tend to remove the ancient landmarks between the Church and the World, have uniformly issued in the decline and extinction, or, what is worse, the corruption of the religious societies by which they have been adopted. On the other hand, a heavy responsibility rests on the abettors of merely prudential regulations which have the effect of repelling from the Lord's Table, any individuals concerning whom there is no reason to entertain a doubt, that the Lord hath received them.

On Restrictions of communion.

It may perhaps admit of serious consideration, whether actual church-membership, in the usual acceptation of the phrase, is an indispen-

sable pre-requisite to communion in the Eucharist. Occasional communion is freely conceded, among Protestant Dissenters, to members of other Christian societies, who at the same time have no voice in the proceedings of the church. Where satisfaction can be obtained as to the religious character of the applicant, it may be questioned whether his not being a member of *any* Christian society, ought to form a bar to his admission under similar regulations. Is there not, in some instances of this description, a preference of order to charity, a needless scrupulosity as to the supposed recognition by such an act, of the initiated disciple as a brother, arising almost to a jealousy of contagion from the presence of the profane? *

At the same time, as church membership comprehends nothing which does not itself par-

* “ I will now adventure to offer to serious consideration,
 “ whether for any party of Christians to make unto itself other
 “ limits of communion than Christ hath made, and hedge up
 “ itself within those limits, excluding those whom Christ
 “ would admit, and admitting those whom he would exclude,
 “ be not in itself a real sin. When I say *make to itself*, this
 “ more particularly concerns those who form their own com-
 “ munion, having nothing herein imposed upon them by civil
 “ authority. Let others censure themselves as they see cause.
 “ They have a holy table among them, the symbol of their
 “ communion with one another in the Lord. I would ask,
 “ ‘ Whose is the table ? ’ Is it the table of this or that man,
 “ or party of men ? or is it the Lord’s table ! Then certainly

take of the character of duty, those who would be ready to claim, on these terms, admission to the Lord's Table, while they declined a closer affiliation with the Christian society, would only be living in the disregard of one duty the less. What distinction soever modern phraseology may observe between the congregation and the church, or, (as in the case of attendants upon private chapels they are sometimes termed,) the *subscribers* and the communicants, those who take their ideas of religious discipline from the New Testament, know of no such distinction, know no persons but *the church*; and the attempt to set up distinct claims on the part or behalf of the congregation, who, in an ecclesiastical sense, are a non-entity, is equally repugnant to the principles of Nonconformity, and to the spirit of the New Testament institutes.

To return from this digression to the rite itself. The only question which can arise among Protestants concerning the Eucharist, must respect the nature of that participation of Christ, of which it is the means or symbol. That the bread and the wine undergo some modifica-

“ it ought to be free to his guests and appropriate to them.

“ And who should dare to invite others, or forbid these ?”

HOWE'S Works. *Preface to Sermons on The Carnality of Religious Contention.* Vol. iv. p. 82.

tion by virtue of the consecration of the Elements by the priest, is a notion not confined to the Romish pale. Luther's doctrine on this point, was, that what, in contradistinction from transubstantiation, he termed a consubstantiation, then takes place. The doctrine of the Church of England does not extend to this, but it recognises some indefinite virtue as communicated to the Elements by the act of consecration, which only "the Priest" can perform, through which they become a "means of grace." The custom of administering the Eucharist to the dying and the condemned, evidently implies and encourages the prevalence of a superstitious notion as to its efficacy; and indeed the language of the formularies, countenances notions which very closely approximate the doctrine of the *opus operatum*. The Catechism, more particularly, instructs the members of the Church to believe that "The body and blood of Christ" are verily and indeed taken and received by "the faithful in the Lord's Supper:" an assertion with which, one would imagine, any Papist would be quite satisfied.

The real design and import of the institution of the Lord's Supper, are expressed in our Saviour's own injunction: "Do this in remembrance of me;" a command which, lest the peculiar circumstances under which it was given, should lead us to imagine it had an ex-

clusive reference to the Apostles, St. Paul was specially directed to enforce on the Church as a duty of perpetual obligation, designed to "shew forth the Lord's death, till he come." In this point of view, it has answered a most important purpose. Amid all the corruptions of the Christian doctrine, and all the vicissitudes which have marked the history of the Church of Christ, the two simple rites which the Divine founder himself instituted, have remained incontrovertible memorials both of the truth of Christianity itself, and of the true nature of its distinguishing doctrines, far more durable than any monumental records could have been, legible in every language, and, throughout the various sects of Christendom, bearing a construction essentially the same. No circumstance has so powerfully contributed to uphold the doctrine of the Trinity, to hand it down unadulterated through the dark ages of prevailing heresy and superstition, as the Baptismal formula, and the confession required at the font. In like manner, the Eucharist, notwithstanding the gross corruption of the ordinance by the Papists, has rendered it impossible that the doctrine of Atonement should be lost. While the Bible lay neglected in the cells of the monastery, and the lamps of the sanctuary were nearly extinguished, this rendered the Sacrament a most important medium of instruction;

and without presumptuously intruding into the secret counsels of Providence, it may be suggested as probable, that the perpetuation, as by a record, of the Saviour's death, might enter into the design of the Divine Institutor in enjoining it upon his disciples as a standing observance.* It was far from being intended, however, to form a mere record: it was to consist in a remembering also of the event which it represented,—in a solemn personal act of devout remembrance; it was to be an act of faith, discerning in those sacred symbols the Lord's body; an act involving at once the expression of fealty to him as **THE LORD**, a glorying in his death as the Crucified One, and a believing expectation of his return. Viewed as the consentaneous act of the whole Church, wheresoever scattered and however divided, there is something in the very circumstance of the celebration of this simple rite from age to age, sublimely impressive. Eighteen hundred

* This seems indeed to be expressly intimated in that remarkable passage; "There are three who bear witness on earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood;" (1 John v. 8.) the first expression referring, as is most probable, to the miraculous attestation, by the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and the latter two, indisputably, to the rite of baptism, and the commemoration of the blood of Christ. "And these three agree in one" testimony, that "God hath given to us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son." V. MACK-
NIGHT on the passage.

years have elapsed since, in a distant province of the Roman empire, the wonderful event took place, which it commemorates; since, in the personal form of a young Jew, who, though his parents claimed to be of royal lineage, occupied an humble station in society, and passed the first thirty years of his life in obscurity, and, after a public ministry of only three years, was delivered by his perfidious countrymen, on a false accusation, into the hands of the Romans, and ignominiously executed as a malefactor; since in this humble "form of a servant," He appeared, at whose name every knee must bow, as the Christ of God. Eighteen hundred years have elapsed, and never during that period have his disciples ceased, in different parts of the world, to meet at stated times, year after year, age after age, to celebrate that ineffable death. When our Saviour left the world, to enter into his glory, an angelic vision assured the select company who witnessed his ascension, while they yet stood gazing up into Heaven after him, that he should in like manner so come again, and that, private in comparison as was his ascension, the whole world should be spectators of the awful glories of his second Advent. By this simple rite, the blessed expectation of the faithful has been kept alive. In the records of his death, the Church, while mourning the absence of her Lord, views at the same time the memorials of

his affection, and the pledges of his return. Every repetition of this act of devout remembrance, brings us still nearer to the period to which all events are pointing, to which all creation, except man himself, the creature most deeply interested, looks forward in the attitude of expectation. Faith, still mindful of his promise, although the fathers are fallen asleep, knowing that the Lord is not tardy, but that with Him a thousand years are as a day, reiterates in this solemn act of obedience, the observance of His command, and the expression of her desire, thus “ shewing forth the Lord's death
“ TILL HE COME.”

And now may it be permitted to ask, whether any unintelligible notions of a Sacramental grace dispensed in the Elements by an apocryphal priesthood, are necessary to dignify the importance or exalt the value of this sacred ordinance? For Nonconformists, it is enough to preclude all controversy on the subject, that the Scriptures contain no revelation as to the existence of any such grace, no promise as to its bestowment. Yet do they believe in a *real presence*. “ Wheresoever,” said our Lord, “ two or
“ three are gathered together in my name, there
“ am I in the midst of them;” and when a Christian church are assembled together with closed doors, in the joint participation of this most sacred ordinance, and in the true commu-

nion of saints, at such seasons, more especially, they believe that Jesus the Lord makes himself known to them “in the breaking of bread.” But the fulfilment of this promise, and the spiritual influxes of light and joy which the Divine presence is adapted to impart, they do not look for at the hands of a priest, nor even from any efficacy in the emblems. The importance attached to the character of the administrator, rests on precisely the same grounds, as in the case of conducting the other public services; and the office of administering is restricted to the pastor, not as invested with any sacerdotal functions, but simply as a ruler of the church, upon whom, as such, devolves the spiritual cognizance of its members. On this account, ordination is considered as a pre-requisite in the officiating minister.

Luke xxiv.
35.

§ 9. These, then, are, as regards the subject of the present chapter, the principles, or, as Dr. Watts may be allowed to term them, “the *advantages* of Protestant Dissenters in matters of religion.” “*You*,” said that eminently pious man, (than whom no individual was ever less actuated by the spirit of controversy,)—“you,” addressing himself to persons professing the principles now advocated,* “are not in so

Advantages
of Protest-
ant Dissent.

* To persons enjoying these advantages, the Doctor’s appeal is most forcible and pertinent: “What do ye more than others?” Into this train of practical remark, the present

“ much danger of taking up with the outward
 “ forms of religion, instead of the inward power
 “ and more spiritual parts of it, as your neigh-
 “ bours may be, and that particularly in the
 “ two following instances: First, you are in no
 “ such danger of mistaking Baptism for inward
 “ and real regeneration, as those who are edu-
 “ cated in the Established Church. You are
 “ not in the least tempted or encouraged in any
 “ of our ministrations to suppose, that your
 “ souls are regenerated by the outward cere-
 “ mony of Baptism, or that you are really
 “ born again and made new creatures by being
 “ baptized with water; to which unhappy
 “ and dangerous mistake, the Office of Bap-
 “ tism in the Church of England, has been
 “ thought to give too much countenance, in the
 “ plain sense of the expressions, and without
 “ any sufficient guard or caution; and the an-
 “ swer in the Catechism which children are
 “ taught, does but too much confirm and es-
 “ tablish them in this mistake. Secondly, You
 “ have no such rite performed among you, as
 “ the solemn imposition of the hands of the

writer cannot with propriety deviate, but he takes the occa-
 sion earnestly to recommend the perusal of the whole work,
 from which these sentences are extracted. It is entitled, “ A
 “ Humble Attempt towards the Revival of Practical Religion
 “ among Christians.”

“ Bishop on your head, to become a token or
“ sign of the favour of God towards you, as is
“ found in the offices of the Established Church.

“ Another advantage that you Protestant
“ Dissenters have, is, that you are freed from
“ the inventions of men and from the imposi-
“ tions and incumbrances of human ceremonies
“ in Divine worship. You are not confined to
“ a perpetual repetition of set forms of prayer
“ in your public worship. You not only worship
“ God in your own chosen way, but you have
“ the choice of your own ministers also, and
“ the communion of your churches is kept more
“ pure and free from unworthy and scandalous
“ members.”

But with regard to those who sustain the office of the Christian ministry among Protestant Dissenters, the moral advantages of the nature of exemption, which are to be set against the political consideration and secular privileges which they forego in consequence of their Non-conformity, are still more numerous and important.

You, it might be said, to continue the style of enumeration, are not required to express *ex animo* your unfeigned assent and consent to all and every thing in a book of human composition, which, after having been subjected to three revisions, still contains so much that the best and wisest men in the Established Church

have wished to see modified or expunged. You are not called upon to submit to be designated as a priest, who, by virtue of his sacerdotal function, is commissioned to forgive sins; you are not laid under the necessity of countenancing this gross corruption of the faith, by pretending to accept from the hands of the bishop, for this purpose, the apocryphal gift of the Holy Ghost. You are not required, whenever a child is presented to you at the font, to declare, after having baptized it, "That it is regenerate and grafted " into the body of Christ's Church;" and to thank God that it hath pleased Him to regenerate it with his Holy Spirit, to receive it for His own child by adoption, and to incorporate it into His Holy Church; nor afterwards to teach that child, that in his Baptism he "*was made* a " member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." You are not liable to the necessity of administering the Lord's Supper to the irreligious, and even the profligate, as a qualification for secular offices, nor to be called upon to perform the same rite in the sick man's room, as a flattering unction laid to his deluded soul. You are not required to pronounce over the sick or dying man of whatever character, after he shall have made confession of his sins to you as "the priest," the form of Absolution, in which you declare, that by the "authority" of Christ committed to

you, you absolve him from all his sins. Nor, finally, when the body of any person not unbaptized or excommunicate, or a suicide, is committed to the dust, are you compelled unequivocally to say, that “Forasmuch as
“it hath pleased Almighty God of his great
“mercy to take unto himself the soul of the
“departed, you therefore commit his body to the
“ground in sure and certain hope of the Resur-
“rection to eternal life;” and to render thanks to God, accordingly, that it hath pleased Him to deliver the deceased “out of the miseries of
“this sinful world.” You are exempt from the responsibility of countenancing and perpetuating this connected series of pernicious error, the still remaining dregs of Popery, with all its practical consequences on the moral and religious interests of the lower classes. You are not taught to regard the administration of these forms, decreed by human authority, as the chief business of your ministry. Neither are you forbidden to preach the Gospel on any but consecrated ground; nor reproached even then, for preaching it as the Reformers preached it,—for preaching evangelical doctrine. You are not required to subscribe to Articles of faith, which attribute to human authority prerogatives incompatible with the rights of conscience and with the nature of moral obligation; nor are you called to recognise as your spiritual rulers and fathers

in God, men who are indebted for their elevation to the ecclesiastical lordship, to circumstances utterly disconnected with the purposes of the Christian Episcopacy, and to qualifications which do not enter into the composition of the appropriate character. You are not, in fine, required to perform that, rather than do which, two thousand pious, laborious clergymen, many of them illustrious men, submitted to ejection from their benefices and their cures, testifying by their noble Nonconformity, that in their opinion, ease, safety, and even usefulness, might be purchased at a price too high. The Church demanded their conscience, and this only they could not, durst not part with.

These are moral advantages which, if presented to the unbiassed mind of a pious individual about to enter into the Established Church, might seem at least sufficient to induce him to pause, and re-consider, before he relinquishes them, the whole of the alternative. There are many pious, useful, inestimable men, who are either unable to view them as advantages, or content to forego them from considerations by which their importance is in their minds over-balanced. These men are the salt of the Establishment, and wherever they are placed, they are lights of the world. Men of not less piety, not less intelligence, but only less enlightened on the points at issue—the true

nature of Christian institutions, and the province of human authority,—are to be found in the Romish Church, reconciled by the force of custom and educational prejudice, to the only conditions on which they could, in their commanding stations, dispense the living waters of truth. Can we deplore in them that happy blindness which is the means of salvation to so many thousands who would listen to the Gospel from no lips but those of their priest? Yet, on the other hand, can we, for *the sake* of these illustrious exceptions, tolerate the errors which they sanction? Who would transplant the palm-tree of the desert?—yet, do a few *oases* change the character of the sands? Let it be enough for us to hold fast the truth, and leave error to its fate,—to “set up the ark, and see if “Dagon will fall.”

END OF THE THIRD BOOK.

BOOK IV.

ON ECCLESIASTICAL ESTABLISHMENTS.

§ 1. **H**E must be a novice in the study of human nature, who does not know, that the mind is guided in its choice or its rejection of opinions, by many other circumstances than the evidence of their truth. The evidence of a thing's being true, becomes perceptible only upon its being examined; but the decision of the understanding takes place often prior to any such examination; that being an act which the mind must have some inducement to perform. The adoption of a new opinion involves a departure from previous habits of thinking, and a change more or less determinate in the associations of ideas, which is sometimes attended with difficulty, even in cases in which there exists the most ingenuous readiness to submit to the laws of evidence. But such a readiness is far from being characteristic of ordinary minds, and the process of thinking required in coming to a rational conclusion upon a disputed point, is one upon which,

Dissenters
arraigned
for the con-
sequences
of their
opinions.

without some adequate motive, men are extremely reluctant to enter. The first impulse upon such an occasion, is, to look round in search of reasons that may authorize the contentedly resting in pre-conceived opinions, among which reasons, the real or imaginary consequences of the opposite opinion, will not fail to have a considerable influence. Examine the objections raised against any proposition with which the opponent is not already familiar, or against any project upon its being first started, and they will appear to be founded almost entirely upon the apprehension of some contingent danger or inconvenience as its result. Let this idea be once connected with a system of opinions, and there is scarcely any degree of moral evidence addressing itself purely to the understanding, which shall be strong enough to procure the admission of its truth.

There can be no question then, as to the policy, whatever may be said against the fairness of the long established practice of connecting disowned consequences with the opinions we wish to discountenance. No chain of argumentative reasoning in disproof of their truth, will produce on the minds of men in general, an impression equal to what is excited by the vague alarm of some supposed tendency to mischief. Whether between the opinion and

its alleged consequences there exists a real or necessary connexion, few persons, comparatively, will care to examine for themselves, even if they should be competent to decide: it is sufficient for them that such a connexion is perceived by others. Very slender proof is requisite to convince people of the existence of danger, more especially when the object of danger is indefinite. Besides, the possible tendencies of an opinion, stretching far out of the reach of their faculties, can be submitted to no test or measurement; here, therefore, beyond the laws of argument, the imagination may freely expatiate.

This intangible species of objection, is that with which Dissenters have had chiefly to contend, and it is the most formidable which they can encounter, for it yields to no logical weapon. In order to bring into suspicion the religious opinions which have been advocated in the preceding chapters, they have been represented as fraught with tendencies hostile to social order. Nonconformity has been again and again denounced as a political crime. Judge Blackstone treats of it, under the head of public wrongs, as an "offence" which "strikes at the national religion,"—a "negative branch" of the same "offence against religion," as "reviling the ordinances of the Church;" and although he confesses that

B. iv. c. 4. "much more is to be pleaded" for the one than for the other, he still denominates it *a crime!*
 "The Church of England," it has been recently asserted in a periodical journal of considerable influence, "is vitally and inseparably
 "connected with the State, and they who are
 "discontented with it, *are but half English-*
 "*men.*" To this assertion, (for it is nothing more,) considered as a charge against themselves, it might seem a sufficient reply, that had they but the alternative of being either half Englishmen or half Christians, they would prefer to deserve the former appellation. Satisfied that it is in all cases right to obey God rather than man, they would only have to confess in the words of the Apostle, when accused of sedition, that, "after the way
 "which others call heresy, so worship they
 "the God of their fathers, believing all things
 "which are written in the law and the pro-
 "phets, and having hope toward God." But as men who love their country, they are interested in repelling a charge which, were it true, would reflect discredit only on the intolerant character of the national institutions. If, in order to being quite an Englishman, it were necessary to approve of every thing in the institutions of our country, it would follow that there was a time when Protestants at large were undeserving of that appellation,—when

Quarterly
 Review,
 Jan. 1817,
 p. 522.

Acts, xxiv.
 14.

all but Papists were “half Englishmen.” Such assertions as these may justly lay claim to be pronounced *oracular*: they are equivocal; in their obvious meaning, they are untrue; in any other sense, they are unmeaning.*

Political institutions are, it is presumed, a means relating to an end; and the end is, in all cases, more excellent than the means, because the excellency of means is conditional and consists in fitness, and concerning the fitness of any means, there is room both for diversity of judgement, and for variations arising out of circumstances, as to the fact. The ends of the political institutions by which England is so pre-eminently distinguished, can be no other

* “It was a malicious artifice,” remarks the author of *Melius Inquirendum*, “of Julian the Apostate, to erect
“the images of the heathen gods in the Forum, near his
“own station, reducing hereby the Christians to this dilemma,
“either to seem to worship the images, whilst they rever-
“enced his statue, or condemn their Sovereign, by refusing
“to bow before the images. Into the same streights would
“the Masters of Ceremonies bring us; that either our loy-
“alty must argue us into a Conformity to their intention,
“or Nonconformity shall be an interpretative contempt of
“authority. Thus it has ever been a successful policy to
“twist their own concerns with those of Majesty and Roy-
“alty, that they may not be separated. And when they
“have laid up their little knacks amongst the sacred
“*κειμηλια*, in his Majesty’s Jewel-house, to touch one
“ceremony, is to steal the Crown.” p. 361.

than the general ends of good government, which are mainly resolvable into the protection of personal rights and the maintenance of social order. The chief excellency of laws, consists in the equality of the protection which they afford, and the measure of freedom of which they leave the individual in unimpaired possession, after all the just demands of the State are satisfied. To these and to any other legitimate ends of our social institutions, as well as to the laws by which our constitutional liberties are secured, Dissenters will yield to no class of their fellow-subjects in ardent attachment. If, with regard to any branch of those institutions, there exists a dissatisfaction, it arises from its not being viewed as a means adapted to those ends, which opinion, however ill-founded, can in justice subject them to no heavier charge than infirmity of judgement on a point on which it would be to their advantage to think otherwise.*

* That Dissenters are, in fact, deserving of pity rather than of heavy punishment, is clear from Judge Blackstone's language. "The sin of schism (Nonconformity) is," he says, "as such, by no means the object of temporal coercion and punishment. If through *weakness of intellect*, "through *misdirected piety*, through *perverseness* and *acerbity of temper*, or, (which is often the case,) through a *prospect of secular advantage* in herding with a party, men "quarrel with the ecclesiastical establishment, the Civil

§ 2. The grounds of Nonconformity are purely religious. It is a question of practical duty, which considerations of political expediency can have no share in determining. Nevertheless, when Dissenters are called upon to answer for the consequences of their opinions, as they bear upon the interests of society, and when what are imputed to their opinions as political consequences, are charged upon those who hold them as the ultimate object of their intentions, it becomes necessary for them, in self vindication, to meet the difficulty in all its extent, and to defend their principles on the lower ground of expediency. Their dissatisfaction with the Establishment will, it may be presumed, be deemed less unreasonable, if it shall appear to proceed from no anti-social sentiments, from no ambition of ascendancy, but from general views as to the impropriety of any such interference as establishments involve, on the part of the civil magistrate, with the concerns of religion. This question presents itself under three distinct aspects: *first*, the right of the State to select and endow a particular sect; *secondly*, the duty of the civil

The question stated.

“Magistrate has nothing to do with it, unless their tenets
 “and practice are such as threaten ruin or disturbance to
 “the state.” Commentaries. b. iv. c. 4.

On the right
of the Ma-
gistrate.

governors to provide religious instruction for the nation; and *thirdly*, the expediency of that particular means of provision.

§ 3. With regard to the *right* of the Magistrate to make laws concerning religion, it cannot fail to be immediately perceived, that the terms are too indefinite to convey any palpable meaning. What is the nature of this right? Is it moral right that is intended, or is it statute right? No word admits of greater latitude of interpretation. Right is sometimes put for a moral claim, sometimes for a legal prerogative; it is used in a still laxer sense, as implying little more than the absence of positive obligation. Its import is, in fact, purely relative, and, according as we refer to the necessary rectitude of the Divine law, or to the competent decisions of human laws, may be used in a sense almost contradictory. Thus, it is freely conceded to the advocate for religious establishments, that to reject the Divine authority of the Gospel, is morally *wrong*; yet, that a Jew has in his civil capacity *no right* to be a Jew, would be a manifestly preposterous assertion. Habits of luxury and dissipation are *morally wrong*, but will any one dispute a man's having a *political right* to lay out his property in any way he thinks fit, so long as he violates none of the laws of society? Yet this must be allowed to be a right to do

wrong; that is to say, all that society can require from the individual, is, that in the use or abuse of his freedom of action, he should not trench upon the social rights of others. In like manner, a State may have a legislative right, in the sense of legal power, to do what may be inconsistent with moral right: the legal right does not cease the moment it is thus abused; the act may proceed from misapprehensions of the dictates of essential rectitude. The *moral claims* of the State cannot, indeed, extend to the violation of the moral rights of the subject, but the injustice of a law does not negative its existence, and when we speak of political right, we speak of what has relation only to human law. Thus, we say that the King has a right to wage war; it is his constitutional prerogative; while yet we may with intelligible consistency deprecate his exercise of that right, as being morally wrong. In the one case, we refer to an existing fact; in the other, to the standard of moral obligation. Absolute right, then, intends that which is forbidden by no law; the only standard of moral right being the law of God; the laws of society, which have their just boundaries in the law of moral rectitude, being the limitation of actual political right.

In meeting this question, "Has not every State a right to ordain what it judges conducive to its preservation, and the good of

Milner's
Ch. Hist.
Cent. iv.
Chap. 17.

“society?” it is necessary first to determine the previous inquiry,—In what sense are the terms used? Is it meant, that the judgement of the State, as to what is conducive to the good of society, is itself the test of its right? If by right is intended natural equity, the only proper basis of good legislation, then, it must be admitted, that every member is morally entitled to the full possession of whatever rights would attach to him in a state of nature, so far as is compatible with the purposes of society. Some of these natural rights are essentially unalienable, because the surrender of them would strip him of the character of a moral agent. Other rights, though not essentially unalienable, are so important to his well-being, that they out-weigh all the benefits of society: of this description is personal freedom, of which, unless forfeited by crime, and so a requisite sacrifice to the public welfare, no man can be deprived without the most atrocious wrong. In order, then, to substantiate the assertion, that the State may, consistently with moral rectitude, ordain what it thinks proper, it behoves the affirmant to shew, that the natural rights of individuals are by such acts left inviolate; for the individuals constituting the government of a country, can have no moral right to infringe upon the social rights of others, any more than any private indivi-

dual, except so far as those rights are forfeited to the laws, and those laws are in themselves equitable.

The actual right of the State to ordain, is, moreover, in a free country, subject to other limitations, connected with the will of the people, and one cannot sufficiently admire the dexterity with which, in the sweeping terms of the position, all considerations of this nature are lost sight of. If indeed by a State, we are to understand the nation at large, the actual right of every nation to make its own laws, cannot be disputed: let those laws be what they may, just or unjust, so long as they do not interfere with the rights of other nations, no one can deny that a people ought in this respect to be left to themselves,—to set up what form of government, and to adopt what system of religion, they think most conducive to the good of society. But if by the State, we are to understand the Government, or “the supreme power,” we must then take the liberty of remarking, that every State has not an equally unlimited prerogative in this respect, but that there are in some countries constitutional restrictions upon the legislative functions of the government, which very considerably modify this right. It may consist with the reasonings of the advocates for Establishments, to speak of an arbitrary despotism, and of a limited

fiducial government in the same terms, and to equalize the supposed rights of each in their hypothesis ; but in point of fact, the State has not in all cases a right to ordain what it judges conducive to the good of society, where the voice of a free people may interpose a protest against its judgement. Constantine had indeed this right to ordain, in its perfection ; his will was the law of political right, and so long as the Roman army were the supporters of his power, he might ordain what he pleased. And so might Julian ! A happy circumstance it must be deemed by the advocates for the establishment of Christianity by the secular power, that there existed at that period no such measure of political freedom in the body of the people, as might have formed a barrier against the arbitrary will of the imperial despot. The English Reformation was, on the part of Henry VIII, attended by a similar exercise of the prerogative of arbitrary power ; the right he exercised, was the right of a tyrant. In the same spirit, by virtue of the same unlimited prerogative, his royal daughters successively overthrew and re-established the Reformed Episcopate : each despotically ordained what she judged conducive to the good of society ; and both, if tyranny is an evil, did wrong. The supreme legislative power is now acknowledged to be a thing distinct from the supreme

magistracy. The royal prerogative, not less than the right of the meanest subject, has its constitutional limit. The right to ordain, therefore, exists under those important modifications which arise out of the nature of a free government, and that government alone is free, to which we may apply the axiom of William Penn, that "The laws rule, and the people
" are a party to those laws."

That the legislative authority vested in the Parliament of Great Britain, is most extensive, and supreme, Dissenters have never been backward to admit. So transcendent is its jurisdiction, that, according to Lord Chief Justice Coke, it can "make, enlarge, diminish, abrogate, repeal, and revive" all laws, civil and ecclesiastical. Its powers extend to the altering, new modelling, or abolishing of the established religion of the country, "as was done by the
" eighth Henry and his family ; they can regulate and change the succession to the Crown,
" as was done in the cases of Henry VIII, William III, and the House of Brunswick ; they
" can alter the constitution of the kingdom, and
" even of parliaments themselves ; witness the
" acts of Union, and the statutes for triennial
" and septennial parliaments." Judge Blackstone allows, that "the power of new-modelling the
" churches, both of England and Scotland,
" (however dangerous its exertion might be,)

Comment.
vol. i. pp.
24, 97.

“ still resides in the parliament of Great Britain :” “ For the bare idea of a State without a power somewhere vested, to alter every part of its laws, is,” he remarks, “ the height of political absurdity.” Undoubtedly, then, the State, that is to say, the supreme legislature, is, in this country, competent to ordain, as regards the matter of political right, whatever it judges conducive to the good of society. It is competent to endow a Protestant Episcopal Establishment in England, a Presbyterian Establishment in Scotland, and a Roman Catholic Establishment in Canada; to appropriate tithes to the maintenance of the clergy, to confer grants on the college of Maynooth, and to vote annual gratuities to poor Dissenting ministers. But even this supreme legislative body, in the exercise of its undoubted prerogative, may err; the exertion of its power, it is admitted, might be dangerous, and nothing hinders but that it might possibly be unjust. It does become unjust, whensoever it interferes with the unalienable rights of men as moral beings, more especially when it infringes upon that “ highest natural right, the right of conscience.” The judgement of the Legislature as to its own acts, does not make them salutary or morally expedient, yet this with regard to ecclesiastical establishments, is the very point to be ascertained: Is the inter-

ference of the magistrate in matters of religion, to the extent involved in such enactments, consistent with the rights of conscience? Or is it justifiable on the ground of expediency? Dissenters misled, it may be, by the testimony of history, and warped in their judgements by the experience they still have of the existing remains of intolerance in the Statute-book, are apt to look upon all such establishments as objectionable on both these grounds. To tell them, that the State has a right to ordain, is uttering a mere truism, which, if adduced in palliation of what is unjust, amounts to an insult. To connect political consequences with this their opinion, with the view of exciting against them popular odium, as if it went to the subversion of the constitution itself, is an indication either of gross ignorance, or of great malignity.

§ 4. But, we are told, it is the *duty*, as well as the *right* of governors, to make laws of this nature concerning religion,—to make their religion the religion of the State. “They must do so, if they regard the temporal good of their subjects.”* Assuredly, if it is their duty, they must have the previous right: the converse of the proposition is not less evident,—if they have not the requisite right, it cannot be their duty.

On the duty of governors in regard to matters of religion.

* Milner's Ch. Hist. Cent. iv. chap. 17.

In order to bring the question of duty into

a tangible form, let us, however, ascertain, first, the source of the obligation, and secondly, the specific nature of the duty.

The duty of regarding the temporal good of his subjects, should seem to be a natural duty binding upon every ruler, arising out of the laws of moral obligation; but the duty of adopting any specific means of providing for this object, must very much depend, one would imagine, upon the legitimacy and wisdom of the expedient. The plan proposed, is, that of making certain "laws concerning religion;" but whence arises the obligation of making these laws? Is it a general obligation extending alike to all princes and governors, or one that is binding only upon Christian rulers, as the consequence of their having acquired more enlarged notions of religious duty? The latter branch of the alternative is seemingly maintained by those who lay the stress upon its being "the true religion" which "the SUPREME POWER has a right to establish by positive institutions." The esteemed ecclesiastical historian already referred to, after having stated in his chapter upon Establishments, that "it is not possible to construct a government that shall preserve order and decorum, without some religious establishment," takes notice of an objection to his hypothesis, which he owns to be, on its first proposal, rather

startling: "Suppose the Civil Magistrate
"should happen to have formed an erroneous
"judgement concerning the true religion: will
"he not, in that case, according to the principle
"of general expediency, be justified in esta-
"blishing a false one?" To this query, the
Dean scruples not to give a decisive negative:
"Nothing can justify the magistrate in esta-
"blishing a false religion." He waives the con-
sideration of such countries as have never
heard of Jesus Christ and his Gospel, founding
his assertion on the fullness and clearness of
the evidences of Christianity, the rejection of
which must betray, he argues, great wicked-
ness of heart. This exception, however, can
avail nothing, as a qualification of the general
position which he has laid down, that a govern-
ment cannot preserve good order and decorum
without some religious establishment. For
either Pagan and Mahomedan establishments
are necessary and conducive to good govern-
ment in those countries which have never heard
of Jesus Christ, or they are not: if they are
necessary, the Supreme Magistrate in those
countries must be considered, on this writer's
hypothesis, as justified in establishing his reli-
gion, although a false one; if they are not
necessary, then it is possible to construct a
government that shall preserve order and de-
corum without some kind of religious esta-

blishment. There is no way of escaping from this dilemma, but by denying the magistrate's right to preserve order and decorum in those countries, previous to his conversion to Christianity.

But how stands the case as to countries where Christianity has not been rejected, yet where the Civil Magistrate does not happen to have formed a very correct notion respecting the nature of the true religion? Is the Roman Catholic religion a true religion, or is it a false one? If it be considered in the former light, then, "the supreme power, has," on the principle contended for, "a right to establish it by "positive institutions, and to ensure public respect to those institutions by *penal laws!*" It is the duty of Roman Catholic governors to establish it,—their duty *because it is the true religion*. Yet how it can be right for the king of Spain to establish Popery, and for the king of England to establish Protestantism, it would be difficult satisfactorily to explain. If, however, the Roman Catholic religion is admitted to be a false religion, and its establishment is contemplated in its just light, as a portentous evil, we are then reduced to this most philosophical conclusion: that the Protestant religion being the only true one, Protestant rulers have the exclusive prerogative, and are exclusively under the obligation, of

establishing their own religion as the religion of the State!*

We do not ask by what infallible guidance the rulers of a Protestant country have ascertained the fact, that their religion is the true one, because we are ready to concede that this is its real character; but still, although Protestants, there is room for their happening not to form a right, that is to say, a Scriptural judgement concerning the religion which they profess. Can their duty be suspended on an antecedent condition of so doubtful a nature, as the rectitude of the human judgement? If not, what is its basis? It is not an obligation which originates in the natural relations of society, since, as we have seen, it does not

* “ If no way of defending our establishment,” remarks the Rev. Mr. Scott, (the Commentator,) “ can be devised, “ which would not, if fairly applied, defend the establishment of Popery, of Mahomedanism, or Pagan idolatry, “ by the authority of kings and rulers; I must acknowledge “ the cause to be desperate. Yet if it be a *right* of kings “ and rulers, to prescribe the creed and manner of worship, “ with its appendages, to their subjects, and to enforce their “ concurrence, it must be equally the *right of all kings*; for “ they *all* think, or profess to think, their own religion to be “ the true religion. Again, if it be the *duty* of kings and “ rulers to prescribe these things to their subjects, it is “ equally the *duty* of all kings, and for the same reason. This “ is the *palladium* of those who oppose establishments; and “ how shall we deprive them of it?” *Evil of Separation.* London, 1817.

apply to all who stand in the same relation of rulers to the governed. Is it a revealed duty? The New Testament contains no direction or command on which it can be founded. The sacred writers abstain altogether from discussions relating to the politics of States, every where teaching us, that the kingdom of Christ "is not of this world."

One only ground remains upon which this obligation on the Magistrate can be supposed to rest, namely, that of expediency; but this leads us to inquire more particularly wherein the duty specifically consists. "The supreme power has a right," it is said, "to establish the true religion by positive institutions." But a religion may be established, by legal protection, and by endowments, to the extent that the Protestant Dissenters of this kingdom are now established, without the erection of an exclusive ecclesiastical incorporation, similar to the English hierarchy. The religious instruction of a people may be provided for by other means than those which limit the right of instruction to a particular class, under conditions which ultimately throw the appointment of religious teachers into the hands of the proprietors of the soil. There are many ways in which a Christian ruler who has formed a right judgement concerning the true religion, may promote the moral and religious interests

of his subjects, in the discharge of his public functions, as well as in his private character, besides that of “making his religion the religion of the State.” That it is his duty to do his utmost both to protect and to promote the true religion, cannot be questioned; but to argue, that he must therefore institute and support an ecclesiastical establishment, and not only so, but proceed to “restrain and punish” the propagators of what he deems “irreligious opinions,” is taking it for granted, that the true religion is capable of being promoted by these methods, and that these, as both legitimate and effectual methods, fall within the line of his public duty; neither of which positions is tenable. The Rev. Mr. Scott, in his Letters to the Rev. Peter Roe, has discovered a singular candour in treating the delicate subject of a ruler’s duty, in reference to the establishment of Christianity. He owns that were a man of affluence, under the pretence of *improving his talent*, (which he considers to be the principle by which a Christian prince should be actuated,) to “claim the *right*, or “consider himself bound in *duty*, by all which “money can do, to bring others over to profess “his creed, or conform to his mode of worship; “because he thinks the one true, and the other “right; he might probably please bigots of “his own party, and make hypocrites, but he

“ would not promote the genuine interests of
 “ Christianity.” The “ using of either wealth
 “ or power, to enforce compliance” with par-
 ticular views of Christianity, he justly depre-
 cates : these are to be employed only “ to pro-
 “ vide, as far as they can by Scriptural means,
 “ for the religious instruction of mankind at
 “ large.” “ Now, whether an establishment of
 “ some kind,” he adds, “ might not be the
 “ best method in which a king or ruler could
 “ improve his talent, *may be a question :*” only,
 “ the negative cannot,” in his opinion, “ be con-
 “ sidered as self-evident.”

This point is readily granted ; and to all that
 can be adduced for the purpose of shewing the
 importance of religion in its bearings upon the
 temporal welfare of the community, and the in-
 terests of the State, no one will hesitate to sub-
 scribe. Christianity, it will be as readily ad-
 mitted, is the only true religion, which alone
 it can be our duty to promote ; but “ a religious
 “ establishment is,” as Dr. Paley remarks,” no
 “ part of Christianity ; it is only the means of
 “ inculcating it.” Into the efficiency and ex-
 pediency of this means, the whole question
 mainly resolves itself.

Dr. Paley's
 View of an
 Establish-
 ment.

§ 5. “ The authority of a church establish-
 “ ment,” remarks the intelligent writer just
 named, “ is founded on its utility : and when-
 “ ever, upon this principle, we deliberate con-

“cerning the form, propriety, or comparative
 “excellency of different establishments, the
 “single view under which we ought to con-
 “sider any of them, is, that of *a scheme of*
 “*instruction*; the single end we ought to pro-
 “pose by them, is, *the preservation and com-*
 “*munication* of religious knowledge. Every
 “other idea and every other end, that have
 “been mixed with this, as the making of the
 “church an engine, or even an ally of the state;
 “converting it into the means of strengthening
 “or diffusing influence, or regarding it as a
 “support of regal, in opposition to popular
 “forms of government; have served only to
 “debase the institution, and to introduce into
 “it numerous corruptions and abuses.” Three
 things are, according to the author’s hypothesis,
 comprehended in the notion of a religious esta-
 blishment: “a clergy, or an order of men se-
 “cluded from other professions, to attend upon
 “the services of religion; a legal provision for
 “the maintenance of the clergy; and the con-
 “fining of that provision to the teachers of a
 “particular sect of Christianity.”

This philosophical view of an Establishment,
 is widely different, it will be immediately per-
 ceived, from the real aspect of existing institu-
 tions, of which, indeed, the very arguments and
 hypotheses of many of the advocates for esta-
 blishments, form a tacit but most pointed con-

Analysis of
 the Scheme.

demnation. There is an obvious disadvantage in encountering an hypothesis which removes the question so far from the ground of fact, presenting it in a shape so abstract as to leave the opponent, at first view, no choice but assuming the whole burden of proof, in regard to the extreme position, that no conceivable description of establishment could under any possible circumstances, be an expedient measure. Our proper business relates to existing establishments: nevertheless, the view taken by Dr. Paley, will sufficiently answer the purpose of enabling us to ascertain their general expediency. According even to his notion of an ecclesiastical establishment, the following circumstances appear to be necessarily involved in the scheme: *First*, the authoritative decision of the State with regard to certain religious opinions, as the truest, if not the only true; *Secondly*, a bounty upon the propagation of belief in those opinions; *Thirdly*, a compulsive obligation laid upon all the subjects of the State, to contribute to the propagation of these opinions; *Fourthly*, the placing of the right of spiritual instruction at the disposal of the proprietors of the soil; and *Fifthly*, the virtual punishment of Dissenters.

§ 6. First: the selection and endowment of the teachers of a particular sect, as an established clergy, involves *an authoritative decision with regard to the opinions of that particular sect*,

as being pre-eminently true. The instruction of the people, the mere communication of knowledge, is not, it must be remembered, either the real or the professed object of the scheme: it is their being instructed in certain opinions exclusively, which it seeks to accomplish; and the only intelligible reason that these opinions are, in preference to any other, erected into a standard of doctrine, is the presumption that they are true. The State, therefore, in the first instance, assumes the right of deciding upon their truth; and this assumption of a right which, as has been already shewn, does not attach to the supreme magistrate as such, (for then it would equally attach to the rulers of Pagan and Mahometan states,) it seeks to justify by the plea of the necessity or expediency of making such a decision. But whether the plea of political expediency, supposing the plea to rest upon good grounds, can justify the Legislature in taking this preliminary step, by which to all intents and purposes it claims to be an authoritative interpreter of Revelation, is a question of precisely the same import as, Whether it can ever be politically right to do that which is morally wrong? If the Church itself has no such authority, the State cannot possess it; it is therefore an illegitimate authority, inasmuch as it seeks to bring under its control, the most sacred and unalienable rights

of man—the rights of conscience; not indeed to the full extent of intolerance, but by laying the subject under political obligations which directly interfere with his moral freedom. That this is really the state of the case, that it is not the general truth of Christianity merely that the State undertakes to determine for its subjects, but the truth of the opinions contained in the established standard, appears from the whole of this author's reasoning. There being, according to his view, “an equal chance” whether, of two religions, that professed by the magistrate, or that which prevails among the majority of the people, should contain more of truth, he considers it as admitting of a doubt, which should be the established religion; but the balance of advantages is, he conceives, in favour of an arrangement by which “an order of men” should be appointed to teach the people their “own religion,” rather than “to convert them” to another; it would seem therefore to be “the duty of the magistrate, in the choice of “the religion which he establishes, to consult “the faith of the nation rather than his own.” This is obviously supposing that the difference between the professed religion of the magistrate, and that of the people, may be extreme; in which case, although the establishment of the latter, rather than of the former, would infringe less upon political liberty, yet the prin-

ciple being the same, a system, or, to use Dr. Paley's phrase, a "species of Christianity," is patronised as true, in preference to a quite different system which is rejected as erroneous. At the same time, it is admitted to be *a chance* whether the chosen system of the two may not contain less of truth, whether the magistrate may not bestow his patronage upon a corrupt species of Christianity; but then, "any form of Christianity," it is argued, "is better than no religion at all,"—an assertion which requires but a very slight modification to make it serve as a plea for the establishment of other religions besides the Christian: any form of religion, it has been affirmed by some, is better than no religion at all. To reconcile us, however, on the ground of general expediency, to encountering the fearful chance that the established system of Christianity should be a corrupt system, this argument can have no weight till it shall first have been proved, that no religious establishment and no religion, are circumstances so inseparable as to authorize our using the phrases as of convertible import.

The professed object of an Establishment, is, to create a supply of religious instruction, but instruction only of a specific kind and quality. The State has no certain means, however, of ascertaining whether the article which it undertakes to furnish, is genuine and unadulterated

truth. In almost every country, except our own, the instruction furnished by the Establishment, will be acknowledged to be of a very mixed and even deleterious kind. Whether or not, the knowledge thus disseminated be better than the total ignorance which it is imagined would otherwise prevail, may be made a question; but what these establishments are actually the means of diffusing, is, it must be allowed, some modification of error. Truth, therefore, that is to say, the knowledge of the true religion, in its purity, remains to be supplied by other means; by means, it may be, which are forbidden. The scheme of instruction adopted by the State, will, in this case, be operating in direct repugnance to the design and tendency of the Gospel. The Legislature has made its election of the doctrines to be promulgated, and its choice is erroneous, and it condemns the nation to all the consequences of its presumptuous mistake, under circumstances which preclude the detection of the imposition.

It being the determination of the State that certain doctrines shall be taught, should it allow the promulgation of other doctrines, its scheme of instruction would be counteracted, and to a certain extent frustrated. A contraband commodity, if we may be allowed the phrase, would be brought to meet the demand which it claimed the prerogative to supply.

Can we then wonder that governments have always manifested so extreme reluctance to relax into the inconsistency of toleration, by giving up the monopoly of instruction, and exposing itself to the competition of an open trade? Yet, how can a purpose be legitimate, with which a measure of simple justice has a tendency to interfere? How can that constitute the right of a State, which can be equitably exercised only by allowing full play to a system of counteraction, and by suffering its own authority to be brought into direct competition with private judgement? Is it not a natural inference, that the State must have outstepped its prerogative, in asserting claims which it would be tyranny to enforce?

Dr. Paley himself acknowledges, that “ a
“ popish king who should believe that salva-
“ tion is not attainable out of the precincts of
“ the Romish church, would” seem to “ de-
“ rive a right” from the principles he has been
contending for, “ to employ the power with
“ which the constitution entrusted him, (which
“ power in absolute monarchies, commands
“ the lives and fortunes of every subject of his
“ empire,) in reducing his people within that
“ communion.” But then, “ *general tenden-*
“ *cies,*” in relation to public utility, *ought* to
regulate this enlightened monarch’s decision!
Even although possessed with the notion, that

“ the religion which he wishes to propagate
“ among his subjects, is that which will best
“ secure their eternal salvation,” yet, he is to
pause, and to reflect “ whether the kind of
“ interference which he is about to exercise,
“ if it were adopted as a common maxim
“ amongst states and princes, or received as
“ a general rule for the conduct of govern-
“ ment in matters of religion, would upon the
“ whole, and in the mass of instances in which
“ his example might be imitated, conduce to
“ the furtherance of human salvation!” And
what if his reflection should serve him no bet-
ter than that of our philosopher appears to
have done, who failed to perceive in this con-
sideration any reason against the same species
of interference, when carried not quite so far!
Who is to enable him to detect the precise
point at which “ the competition of particular
“ and general consequences,” renders it expe-
dient, on the ground of public utility, that
“ one general rule should submit to another
“ rule which is still more general?” What is
to reconcile him to the idea of relinquishing
the furtherance of his own people’s salvation,
merely because his example might possibly, if
imitated by some heretic or infidel potentate,
lead to the perdition of the remote and un-
known nation subject to his dominion?—more
especially since, on consulting Dr. Paley, he

will learn, that “ the right of the magistrate to
“ ordain, and the obligation of the subject to
“ obey,” may, in matters of religion, be at
variance, and that they “ will be so, as often
“ as they flow from opposite apprehensions
“ of the Divine will.” He has only then to
reflect, that “ whatever plea the State may al-
“ lege to justify its edict, the subject can have
“ none (in such a case) to excuse his compli-
“ ance,” and to hope that those less fortunate
subjects of a less enlightened despot, will still
acknowledge, albeit at the expense of their for-
tunes or their lives, the truth of that “ sacred
“ and undisputed maxim,” which he himself
so conspicuously venerates, that “ it is right
“ to obey God rather than man !”

Although the question of Right has already
been disposed of, Dr. Paley’s definition of the
terms employed in the above position, deserves
to be adverted to. Its being right, implies,
according to his own explanation, that it is
“ consistent with the Divine will,” for the ma-
gistrate to ordain, what the subject is under an
obligation, originating also in the Divine will,
to disobey ! This assuredly looks like charging
a necessary contradiction upon the dictates of
the Divine will. It is true, that this diversity
may be referred to “ opposite apprehensions”
of duty, but the objection is not thereby re-
moved, since the obligation to act upon those

apprehensions, even though they should be erroneous, is admitted. It follows, then, that the magistrate acts consistently with the Divine will, in punishing men for discharging the obligations they are under to act according to their apprehensions of duty,—that is, in punishing them for their obedience to the laws of God. Such is the labyrinth of absurdities into which the notion of general expediency has misled this ingenious advocate for establishments!

To return to the right of decision exercised in the endowment of a particular sect. If any doubt remains as to the justness of the representation, that the State, in making its selection of an order of teachers, pronounces authoritatively upon the truth of the doctrines for the promulgation of which it provides; we have only to consider the light in which dissenters from what is termed the established religion, have generally been regarded. When Henry the Eighth established at once his own theological opinions, and his own supremacy, it is needless to enter into the proof that he regarded himself as invested with an authority to decide controversies in matters of faith. “ By
“ statute xxxi. Henry VIII. c. 14, The bloody
“ law of the six articles was made, which es-
“ tablished the six most contested points, tran-
“ substantiation, communion in one kind, the
“ celibacy of the clergy, monastic vows, the

“ sacrifice of the mass and auricular confes-
 “ sion; which points were ‘ determined and
 “ ‘ resolved by the most godly study, pain,
 “ ‘ and travail of his majesty; for which his
 “ ‘ most humble and obedient subjects, the
 “ ‘ lords spiritual and temporal, did not only
 “ ‘ render and give unto his highness their most
 “ ‘ high and hearty thanks,’ but did also enact
 “ and declare all oppugners of the first to be
 “ heretics, and to be burnt with fire; and of
 “ the five last to be felons, and to suffer
 “ death.”* By the statute I. of Elizabeth, c. 1,
 “ heresy was reduced to a greater cer-
 “ tainty than before,” but the writ *de hæretico*
comburendo remained still in force, and “ a
 “ man continued still liable to be burnt for
 “ what *perhaps he did not understand to be he-*
 “ *resy, till the ecclesiastical judge so interpreted*
 “ *the words of the canonical Scriptures.*” Two
 “ Anabaptists” were burnt in the seventeenth
 of Elizabeth, and two Arians in the ninth of
 James I. Thus far, it is undeniable that the
 State assumed the prerogative of deciding
 upon the tenets which it enforced by these in-
 famous edicts, as true. The same species of
 interference was exerted by the Legislature,
 “ with regard to one species of heresy,” in the
 reign of William the Third, by a statute inflict-
 ing certain penalties and incapacities on the
 impugners of the doctrine of the Trinity. The

Blackstone,
B. iv. ch. 4.

ix. and x.
Will. III.
c. 32.

Schism Bill, the operation of which, after it had passed both Houses, was so happily frustrated by the death of the last of the Stuarts, was founded upon the same assumption of a right to punish Dissent as a crime against religion; for schism and heresy, though not offences of the same degree, alike relate purely to religion, and in this oppressive statute, they were visited with the same punishment. Modes of worship are, not less than the matter of belief, distinguishable as true or false; it is as much beyond the province of secular authority, therefore, to legislate respecting the ordinances, as respecting the doctrines of Christianity, the latter being indeed involved in the former. The canons of the Church of England denounce excommunication against all separatists, not as heretics, but as schismatics, terming their opinions on the subject of religious discipline, “wicked and anabaptistical errors.”

But, perhaps, the legal protection now extended to Nonconformists, may be thought to imply a recognition, to a certain extent, of the truth of their opinions, or an abandonment, on the part of the State, of the authority to decide upon matters of faith. Blackstone, however, affirms, that “the crime of non-conformity is by no means universally abrogated.” The very notion of toleration includes a reference to

something which is in itself censurable. It is error, not truth, which we tolerate; and those opinions and practices which are only tolerated, cannot be said to be recognised as true. Besides, the requisitions of the State, as regards the matter of belief, have been in no respect lowered; nor has its exclusive patronage been in any degree withdrawn from the members of the Establishment. Obedience, therefore, is still claimed to the authority by which a belief in the truth of certain prescribed tenets, has been constituted a political duty; an authority which certainly deemed itself competent to decide that those tenets are true, and which founded on their being true, its anxiety to secure their exclusive promulgation. The whole influence of the State is still employed to effectuate this object; and no reason can be assigned either for the preference of a particular sect, or for the precautions taken to secure uniformity of opinion by religious tests,—no reason for the disproportionate price which an establishment sets upon a specific kind of instruction, to the disparagement of the efficiency of every other kind, but the previous authoritative decision, that the doctrines, ritual, and constitution of the established sect, have indefinitely superior claims to be regarded as scriptural or true, and that their truth may be made the matter of human legislation. Such a decision,

however, must be ultimately resolved into an assumption of authority in matters of religion precisely of the same nature, although not carried to the same intolerant extent, as that against which we protest in the Church of Rome. The distinctions subsisting between the different sects of Protestantism are purely religious distinctions; they relate directly to the conscience; they originate in differing interpretations of the same acknowledged rule,—interpretations which claim to be received as genuine in exact proportion to the degrees of evidence of which they are, or may seem to be, severally susceptible. The decision of the State cannot determine this point for any individual. In substituting its own authority for evidence, as the rule of decision, it employs its influence for an illegitimate purpose. Whatever modification of the Christian doctrine is conscientiously regarded as the true interpretation of the revealed standard, that is to him who so adopts it, the medium of the Divine authority; that is the construction of the rule which is binding upon his conscience. Till he can be discharged from personal responsibility, he must abide by his own convictions, and he must be left free to act upon them, for in so doing, he can alone testify his subjection to what he regards as the will of the Divine legislator. Authoritative decisions which place a

particular interpretation of the law of faith on a level with the law itself, subvert, in effect, altogether the right of private judgement. Their efficiency, if they are to answer any purpose, must consist, either in their inducing a change in the opinions, (which, so far as produced by such means, would have no rational cause,) or, in their leading men to act independently of their convictions, in disregard of their personal accountableness in the matter of religion. Such is the genuine operation of human authority, when it assumes to be the arbiter of truth, the “defender of the faith.”*

* AUTHORITY “is indeed,” remarks Bishop HOADLEY, “the greatest and most irreconcilable enemy to truth and argument, that this world ever furnished out since it was in being. It is *authority* alone which keeps up the grossest errors in the countries around us. And where truth happens to be received for the sake of *authority*, there is just so much diminished from the love of truth, and the glory of reason, and the acceptableness of men to God, as there is attributed to *authority*.”

“It was *authority*, which crushed the noble sentiments of Socrates, and others in the heathen world; and prevented the reception of them amongst men. It was *authority*, which hindered the voice of the Son of God himself from being heard; and which alone stood in opposition to his powerful arguments, and his Divine doctrine; whilst it was a more moving question, amongst the people, to ask, Do any of the Pharisees, or doctors of the Mosaic law believe in him? than to ask, Whether ever man spoke, or lived, or worked wonders like him; and whilst

Establish-
ments view-
ed as a
bounty.

§ 7. Secondly, An Establishment includes the idea of a *bounty upon a particular species of religious instruction*, and the systematic appli-

“ excommunication, or being put out of the ‘synagogue,
 “ was the mark set upon those who should embrace his
 “ religion, it was *authority* among heathens, which after-
 “ wards put all the stop to Christ’s profession, which this
 “ world could put. And when Christians increased into a
 “ majority, and came to think the same method to be the
 “ proper one, for the advantage of their cause, which had
 “ been the enemy and destroyer of it: *then*, it was the *au-*
 “ *thority* of *Christians* which, by degrees not only laid
 “ waste the honour of Christianity, but well-nigh extin-
 “ guished it amongst men. It was *authority* which brought
 “ in all that merciless heap of useless and burthensome fop-
 “ peries; prayers in an unknown tongue; prayers to multi-
 “ tudes of beings; and the whole load of absurdities and
 “ depravations of true religion under which the Christian
 “ people were in captivity, till they became gross and
 “ weighty enough at last, to break the props that supported
 “ them. It was *authority* which recommended and guarded
 “ them, by disgraces and by inquisitions, by making it infam-
 “ mous, or terrible, to any, to oppose them. It was *autho-*
 “ *riety* which would have prevented all reformation where it
 “ is; and which has put a barrier against it, wherever it
 “ is not. It was *human authority in religion*, which alone
 “ set up itself against the beginnings of this Church of
 “ England itself; and which alone now contests with it the
 “ foundation upon which it stands. This authority was at
 “ first exercised in little, by those who were so far from
 “ pretending to such enormities as it afterwards arrived at,
 “ that they would have detested and abhorred the thought
 “ of them. And so it will be, for ever, and every where.

cation of secular inducements, for the production of a corresponding profession of belief. By a bounty upon any branch of commerce, is meant, the attempt to force by premiums, a supply beyond the demand, or to reward the production of a particular article by a sum over and above its marketable value. Instruction is, upon the scheme under consideration, the commodity which is professedly supplied; the wants which it is designed to meet, are not

“ The calling in the assistance of mere authority, even
 “ against errors or trifles, in religious matters, at first, will
 “ by insensible degrees come to the very same issue that it has
 “ been ever hitherto seen to end in. And how, indeed, can
 “ it be expected, that the same thing which has in all ages,
 “ and in all countries, been hurtful to truth and true reli-
 “ gion amongst men, should, in *any* age, or in *any* coun-
 “ try, become a friend and guardian of them; unless it can
 “ be shewn that the nature of mere *authority*, or the nature
 “ of man, or both, are entirely altered from what they have
 “ hitherto been? For it is not in religion, as it is in the
 “ civil concerns of human life. The end of human society
 “ is answered by outward behaviour and actions: which
 “ therefore, ought to be restrained and governed by civil
 “ authority? But the end of religion, and of the Christian
 “ religion in particular, is *destroyed*, just in proportion to
 “ the influence of great names, and to the effect of world-
 “ ly motives, and mere *authority* of men, separated from
 “ the arguments of reason, and the motives and maxims of
 “ the Gospel itself.”—BISHOP OF BANGOR’S “ *Answer to*
 “ *the Committee of the Lower House of Convocation.*” pp.
 313—315.

less real in themselves, nor do they less infallibly produce a demand, than any of the physical wants of society. The same maxims, therefore, may without violence, be applied to the case of religious instruction, as to the case of any other species of production.

Viewed in this light, the scheme of an Establishment is open to formidable objections of an economical nature. Why, it might be said, if its object be to furnish instruction, is the bounty attached to the production of a specific kind, when other kinds are equally adapted to meet the demand? Why should not the respective qualities of each kind be left to recommend it to the preference of the community? The only reason that can be given, is, that the State has other ends to answer by this mode of provision, than that the people should simply be supplied with religious knowledge; that its object is to give an advantage to that specific kind which it has adjudged to be the best. But in relation to what purposes is it the best? Is it the best in its influence upon the social character? Instruction of any kind is influential in proportion, not to its abstract goodness of quality, but to its being actually imbibed. In other words, religion can answer any purpose to society, only so far as it becomes in individuals a principle of action. A system of religion is good exactly in proportion as it is

true; it is influential only in proportion as it is believed. On this account, a system of belief chosen by the individual himself, even although a false one, is more likely to have the desired effect to make him a good member of society, than the profession of the true religion imposed upon him by another. The credibility of a man's testimony, for instance, is by no means necessarily dependent upon his creed. An oath taken upon the Koran by a Mahomedan, is as good for the purposes of society, as the oath of a Christian upon the Gospels, provided there is, in each case, equal reason to believe that the individual is conscious of the obligation of an oath. The case is still stronger with regard to the different sects of Protestantism. The affirmation of a quaker will, in any court of justice, go as far as the oath of an episcopalian. Civil character, it is evident, is a thing perfectly distinct from religious profession. An Establishment, therefore, which distinguishes between particular systems of doctrine as false or true, leaves us still to seek for the evidence of a man's being religious in any sense which can be of advantage to society. All systems, unless they directly authorize fraud or licentiousness, are, in proportion to their influence as principles of action, equally conducive to the legitimate purposes of the State: their actual influence in

particular instances, is a fact which must be determined, not by their truth, but by the probabilities upon which we found our good or bad opinion of a man's social character. It is granted that the truest religion, if believed, will have the best tendency; but not to advert to the incompetency of the State to determine which is the truest, a scheme, the efficiency of which terminates at securing a mere profession of belief, (admitting that what it provides is truth,) will, after all, be inferior in tendency to one which effectuates the great object of making men, though by a ruder kind of instruction, religious.

Is the species of knowledge upon the production of which the State sets so high a premium, the best in any higher reference, as relating to human salvation? The benefits to be derived from the knowledge of the true religion in this respect, so entirely depend upon a cordial belief in its doctrines, as the matter of Divine revelation, and upon a right disposition of the heart with regard to the objects of faith, including both the operation of free choice, and a corresponding habit of the affections, that its being prescribed to a man by the State as the best, can be of no service to him whatsoever, unless he also deems it to be the best, that is to say, the truest: and this, on grounds very different from its being the religion of the State. Those

persons who should adopt a system of faith because it happened to be the established religion, would, on the supposition of its being true, adopt it upon false grounds, under the operation of incorrect motives, and would evince, that their conception of the truth was not agreeable to its genuine character. It is needless to remark in how large a majority of instances this rule of decision would mislead, as it has misled thousands, to adopt a system of error. But, supposing the established religion to be the best, unless it be the *only* modification of Christianity, by believing in which a man may be saved, unless rejecting this, he is "left to the un-
"venanted mercies of God," its being abstractedly the best, is no reason why it should be thus exclusively prescribed, since of all possible systems deducible from the word of God, by which salvation is attainable, it is right that every one should adopt that which seems to him the most accordant with the dictates of Inspiration, since, through his faith, not through his accuracy of judgement, he shall be saved.

If, however, on the ground of its being for this or any other purpose the best, the State deemed it advisable to encourage by a bounty the production of a certain species of doctrinal instruction, one would expect that every precaution should be taken to secure its being actually produced. Dr. Smith, in treating of

The bounty
ineffectual
to secure a
supply.

*Wealth of
Nations,
B. iv. c. 5.*

bounties, shews how the State suffers itself to be imposed upon when, as in the case of a tonnage bounty, the premium is proportioned, not to the diligence or the success of the trader, but to the burden of the ship, and vessels are in consequence too frequently fitted out “for the sole purpose of catching not the fish, but the bounty.”* This is exactly what

* The following opinion of Archbishop Cranmer respecting ecclesiastical sinecures, occurs in a letter to Cromwell (Earl of Essex), given in Burnet’s History of the Reformation, relative to “the new establishment in the metropolitan church of Canterbury.”

—“Nevertheless in my opinion, the prebendaries, which will be allowed 40*l.* a piece yearly, might be altered to a more expedient use: and this is my consideration, for having experience, both in tymes past, and also in our daies, how the said secte of prebendaries have not only spent their time in much idleness, and their substaince in superfluous belly chere, I think it not to be a convenient state, or degree, to be mainteyned and established; considering first, that commonly a prebendarie is neither a learner, nor teacher, but a good viander. Then by the same name they look to be chief, and to bere all the hole rule and preheminance, in the college where they be resident. By means whereof, the younger of their own nature, given more to pleasure, good chere, and pastime, than to abstynance, studye, and lerning, shall easily be brought from their books to follow the appetite and example of the said prebandaries being their hedds and rulers. And the state of prebandaries hath been so excessively abused, that when learned men hath been admitted unto such room, many times they have desisted from their good

takes place in an Establishment. Those who stipulate to provide the required article—instruction, are paid not for the supply they furnish, but merely for their undertaking to supply it; the bounty, instead of being bestowed on the production, is bestowed on the mere promise of production, without the least security being either given or required, that the stipulated article shall be produced. What is the fact? Unless we consider the reading of prayers as an efficient mode of instruction, no service whatever is rendered in a very large proportion of instances in which the bounty is received. No intention of rendering it is entertained at the time of making the engagement. Indeed,

“ and godlie studies, and all other vertuous exercise of
 “ preaching and teaching; wherefore if it may so stand with
 “ the king’s gracious pleasure, I would wish that not only
 “ the name of a prebendarie were exiled his grace’s founda-
 “ tions, but also the superfluous conditiones of such persons.
 “ I cannot deny but that the beginning of prebendaries, was
 “ no less purposed for the maintenance of good learning
 “ and good conversation of living, than religious men were;
 “ but for as much as both be gone from their first estate and
 “ order, and the one is found like offendour with the other,
 “ it maketh no great matter if they both perish together:
 “ For to say the truth, it is an estate which St. Paule,
 “ reckoning up the degrees and estates alowed in his time,
 “ could not find in the Church of Christ.” *Records. Part III.*
 B. iii. No. 65.

In 1817, to
4,814, out
of 10,603.

the larger part of the bounty which is exacted from the nation, is not directed at all to the production of the supply of religious knowledge, being arbitrarily appropriated, in very unequal shares, to offices connected with the Establishment, of the nature of sinecure, the holders of which render no service whatever to the public. Under this description may be ranked the large body of non-resident clergymen, amounting, in 1811, to between five and six thousand,* with the exception of the few who out of this number are virtually resident. Deans and chapters, prebendaries and canons, all who constitute the mere state-equipage of the scheme, pluralists to the extent to which their engagements exceed the possibility of their service, are receiving the bounty upon religious instruction upon the same false pretences. The reason assigned for such an arrangement, by the apologist for Establishments, is, that the edification of each rank in society, is better provided for by stationing in each an order of clergy of its own class and quality, and that the fund thus distributed, produces "more effect, both as an allurements to

PALEY: Ch. on Establishments. "men of talents to enter into the Church, and
"as a stimulus to the industry of those who
"are already in it." The reply to this statement is obvious: *first*, the edification of the

higher ranks is not the allotted business of the higher orders of clergy, inasmuch as men of all ranks are equally bound to attend upon the instructions of the parish priest, or of his curate, and the sinecurists referred to have no share in producing the desired provision: *secondly*, the allurements and the stimulus have no tendency to produce a larger or better supply of actual provision, but simply to ensure a larger number of candidates for the bounty itself, which, as it is never proportioned to the *industry* of the labourer, can never stimulate him to greater activity.

It is admitted, that those among the clergy who contribute by their writings to the religious instruction of the people, although they should render no other service, do yet come under the description of effective labourers. The encouragement given to men of learning to enter the Church, in order that they may be at leisure to prosecute their studies with a view “to augment the fund of sacred literature,” is assigned by Dr. Paley as an argument in favour of the scheme of an Establishment. And “this leisure and opportunity must,” he contends, “be afforded to great numbers,” in order to produce a few capable of subserving the desired object, on the same principle as that on which “we sow many seeds to raise one “flower.” Unless, however, opportunity car-

The bounty
not a premi-
um upon ta-
lent.

ried with it the power of a motive, a scheme which supersedes the necessity of any species of industry, would not seem to be the best adapted to give birth to exertion. The operation of a fund in which the industrious and the idle equally participate, must have a directly opposite tendency: it amounts, in fact, to a bounty upon inefficiency, for the inefficient are, in comparison, gainers to the extent of the labour furnished by the industrious which receives no remuneration. In like manner, “the endowments of schools and colleges,” as Dr. Smith has remarked, “have necessarily diminished, more or less, the necessity of application in the teachers. Their subsistence, so far as it arises from their salaries, is evidently derived from a fund, altogether independent of their success and reputation in their particular professions.”* “In every profession, the exertion of the greater part of those who exercise it, is always in proportion to the necessity they are under of making that exertion.” In an Establishment, no such necessity is laid upon those who receive the pay of the State. The stipend is not a premium given to encourage extraordinary diligence, to promote emulation, or to reward actual service, for then, learning, if not religion, might be the better for its application; but it is to all intents and purposes a *tonnage bounty*;

* B. v. c. i.
Art 2.

a bounty professedly bestowed on the production of a particular species of religious teaching, but bestowed, in reality, to a great extent, upon those who produce nothing whatsoever. The men of learning, and others who by their writings efficiently contribute to the service of religion, are not the persons with regard to whom the inequality in the distribution of this fund, operates as an allurements, or proves to be a reward; but are, for the most part, men actively engaged in the discharge of their appropriate functions, and enjoying very moderate portions of the bounty which, in the shape of benefices, prebends, and other dignities, is freely lavished upon mere sinecurists.

Another reason yet remains to be noticed, in favour of rewarding with so high a bounty, the mere covenant to supply the required sort of instruction; it is this: "The interested diligence of the clergy," says David Hume, (another advocate for Establishments,) "is what every wise legislator will study to prevent." Their encouragement cannot, as he conceives, "be *safely* intrusted to the liberality of individuals who are attached to their doctrines, and who find benefit or consolation from their spiritual ministry and assistance;" because, although their industry and vigilance would "be whetted by such an additional motive," and their skill in their profession in-

Hume's argument for the bounty.

creased, yet this very diligence would display itself in a pernicious emulation to increase the number of their followers at the expense of truth and decency! “ In the end, the civil “ magistrate,” he adds, “ will find that he has “ dearly paid for his pretended frugality in “ saving a fixed establishment for the priests; “ and that, in reality, the most decent and “ advantageous composition which he can “ make with the spiritual guides, is, to bribe “ their indolence, by assigning stated salaries “ to their profession, and rendering it super- “ fluous for them to be farther active, than “ merely to prevent their flock from straying in “ quest of new pastors. And in this manner “ ecclesiastical establishments, though com- “ monly they arose at first from religious “ views, prove in the end advantageous to the “ political interests of society.”

With the same views of the actual *effect* of this excessive bounty conceded to a favoured sect, Dr. Smith argues, that the sovereign must, in order to be secure, possess the means of holding the clergy in dependency upon the executive power. “ In a country where the “ law favoured the teachers of no one religion “ more than another,” this would not, he admits, be necessary. “ In such a situation, he “ would have no occasion to give himself any “ concern about them, further than to keep

“ the peace among them, in the same manner
 “ as among the rest of his subjects, that is, to
 “ hinder them from persecuting, abusing, or
 “ oppressing one another. But it is quite
 “ otherwise, where there is an established or
 “ governing religion. The sovereign can in
 “ this case never be secure, unless he has the
 “ means of influencing in a considerable de-
 “ gree, the greater part of the teachers of that
 “ religion. And he can influence it only by
 “ the fears and expectations which he may
 “ excite. Those fears and expectations may
 “ consist in the fear of deprivation or other
 “ punishment, and in the expectation of fur-
 “ ther preferment.”

B. v. c. 1.

In these passages, the design of the scheme of an Establishment, is openly and distinctly represented to be, to corrupt the motives of its instruments, and to render the supply of religious instruction a source of influential patronage to the State. That it has this tendency can scarcely be denied. To defend it on this ground, I leave to the apologist for corruption as a means of good government, and to the advocate for expediency as the basis of morals. As to the dangers arising to the State from an Establishment, they are far from being chimerical; yet it is seldom, if ever, that any sect has given trouble to the civil government, until, if established, it was robbed, or, if not esta-

blished, oppressed. A good government needs not the aid of corrupt influence to render it secure. A government which should owe its security to corruption, cannot be a good government.

Inefficiency
of the
bounty as
respects
quality
of service.

Hitherto we have been viewing the ineffectual operation of the bounty upon ecclesiastical performances, in respect of the mere *quantity* of service which it procures. It may be worth while just to advert to the total failure of the expedient, as regards the *quality* of the supply. The required provision is, a specific kind of religious teaching, of which the Articles proposed for subscription, may be assumed to be the standard. What security is there that instruction answering to this sample shall be actually furnished? What precautions are taken to ensure, in the party undertaking to furnish it, efficient capacity to instruct? What is to prevent a totally opposite species of instruction from being administered? Obviously, none. The Articles are an instrument of exclusion, in reference not to the doctrines taught, but to the teachers who decline, on the condition of subscription, the offered bounty. Those who have subscribed to the Articles, preach, it is notorious, when they do preach, what they please; and the comparatively small minority who preach in conformity to the doctrine of the Thirty-nine Articles, are a class upon whom

good care is taken that a very moderate share of the bounty should fall ; they are the class who render the most service, and have the least pay. The same species of doctrinal instruction, is produced by teachers of other sects, without any bounty or premium upon the production, without any consequent expense to the State. If the mere supply of the natural demand were the sole object of an Establishment, the bounty upon the article, when thus shewn to be unnecessary for its production, might be expected to be withdrawn. The result of an open competition must needs be, to give a prodigious ascendancy to truth over error. People are, after all, not the less disposed to believe in a thing because it is true, nor are they inclined to disbelieve its truth, in proportion to the clearness of the evidence by which it is attested. That which is the truest religion, will in the end approve itself as the best. Besides, where the Bible is in the hands of the common people, a test is at hand, by which they may examine the nature of the tendered supply ; and this will render it extremely difficult to impose upon them a vitiated article, whatever bounty is laid upon its production. It is rather a suspicious circumstance, that the receivers of this ecclesiastical bounty should, as a body, manifest so excessive an anxiety to discourage the circulation of a test which presents the infallible means of de-

tecting imposition. This dread of the Bible, this great care “not to suffer the word of God to go abroad without the word of man to speak for it,”—what does it denote, but a consciousness that their claims to this bounty do not arise from the quality of what they furnish, or the efficiency of the services they yield, that they rest upon a fiction, upon pretence? This pretence is religious instruction, while the real object of the system, is, the appropriation of a bounty conceded by the State, which receives back an equivalent in influence?

Such are the economical objections to which the scheme of an Establishment is liable, but as embracing the systematic application of secular inducements to the consciences of men, for the purpose of producing a professed belief in certain doctrines, it is further to be viewed as operating in direct contrariety to the design of the Gospel.

Christianity
a system of
motives.

Christianity is a system of doctrines, that is to say, its authoritative claims relate in the first instance to our belief in an assemblage of facts: but this by no means describes the whole of its nature. Christianity is also a system of *motives*, its object being less to produce an assent to its doctrines, than to effect a change in the disposition and character. One of the most prominent features in this change, the New Testament writers uniformly

represent to be, a spirit of self-renunciation, and of magnanimous indifference with regard to the honours and possessions of this world.

“Love not the world,” says the Apostle John, “neither the things that are in the world.

“If any man love the world, the love of the

“Father is not in him.” “How can ye be-

“lieve,” said our Saviour, “who receive ho-

“nour one of another?” “How hardly shall

“they that have riches enter into the king-

“dom of God!” Nothing is more conspicu-

ous than the constant solicitude manifested by

our Saviour, to exclude the operation of secu-

lar inducements from having any share in pro-

ducing a reception of his doctrine. When a

strife arose among his disciples, (probably in

anticipation of their being eventually advanced

to temporal dignity in the Messiah’s kingdom,)

“which of them should be the greatest,” our

Lord expressly told them, that lordship and

authority formed no part of what they had to

expect as his followers, who himself “came

“not to be ministered unto, but to minister,

“and to give his life a ransom for many.” For

some time, it is evident that his disciples che-

rished fond expectations of realizing in the pre-

dicted Messiah, the deliverer of Israel, and of

sharing in the glories of his temporal reign.

They were extremely slow to conceive, that the

kingdom which HE came to establish, “is not

1 John, ii.
15.

John v. 44.

Luke xviii.
24.

Matt. xx.
28.

Acts i. 6.

“ of this world.” The death of their Master plunged them in despondency, but did not wholly dissipate these delusions: “ We trusted
“ that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel.” But, after his resurrection, their hopes seemed to be rekindled, and with eagerness they inquired: “ Lord, wilt thou at this
“ time restore the kingdom to Israel?” A remarkable change, however, subsequently took place in their views and their characters. Armed with a very different spirit, they went forth as the preachers of Christ crucified, perceiving how God had chosen things base and despicable in the sight of the world, as the instruments of bringing to nought the objects of that world’s idolatry. *Then*, the circumstances of the Christian calling, seemed to preclude the possibility of secular influence vitiating the motives of the professed convert. “ Those who
“ believed,” are said to have “ sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all
“ men, as every man had need.” No room was left for the operation of any lower inducements than those which had respect to the recompense of the final reward. And when Simon Magus would have purchased the power (which is claimed by the bishops of the Establishment on a title not very different) of conferring on whomsoever he might lay hands, the Holy Ghost, with what severity of indignation is his impious offer

rejected: “Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.” How does the Apostle Paul spurn at the idea of making a gain of the Corinthians, refusing to burden them even to the extent of his personal support! It is however predicted, that the time would come, when false teachers should arise, who should “*with feigned words make merchandize*” of them. “Feed the flock of God which is among you,” says St. Peter, “taking the oversight thereof, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind: neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.” And what are the motives which the inspired writers propose to call into action as substitutes for the allurements and stimulants of secular rewards? “The love of Christ constraineth us.” “They watch for your souls as those that must give account.” “Feed the Church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood.” Any motives short of what such expressions as these imply, could, in their view, have no efficiency to produce a care for the souls of men; nor could any qualifications exclusive of this, constitute a fitness for the ministerial office. The idea of bribing men to teach, and that of compelling them to believe, were equally remote from the notions which the Apostles entertained of the religion

Acts viii. 20.

2 Cor. xi. 9.

2 Thess. iii. 8.

2 Peter, ii. 3.

1 Pet. v. 2.

of Jesus Christ. They disclaimed alike all dominion over the faith of the Church, and all the craft of a worldly policy, contenting themselves with inculcating on the churches the equitable principle, that "the labourer is worthy of his hire."

Contrast with this representation the language of the advocates for Establishments. Examine the motives which the inducements attached to that scheme call into action, and their bearings upon the ministerial character. Judge of the nature of that faith, of the efficiency of that teaching, which are produced by the bounty of the State; judge of them by their fruits. Compare the principle of sowing many seeds to raise one flower, with that on which the founders of Christianity proceeded; and bring to the same test, the political expedients of subordinating the teachers of religion, by the hope of preferment, to the interests of the sovereign, of bribing their indolence by rendering them independent of those who are alone interested in their exertions, and of thus alluring men of talent to take up a profession which they would otherwise despise. Finally, contemplate in all the length and breadth of its operation, this plan for identifying the once irreconcilable interests of God and the world, the praise of men and the reward of heaven, extending through all the gradations of society,

from him who receives for being a minister of Christ, his twenty-thousand pounds a year, down to the poor artisan or dealer of the country village, whose scanty maintenance hangs on his keeping to his church. Who can but admire the perfection of the mechanism, the harmony of the scheme? How can that Establishment be any other than the palladium of true religion in the country in which it exists, which employs in its promotion every motive that has respect to the fears and hopes and interests of this present world, compelling men, though not exactly in the scriptural import of the words, —compelling them “to come in!”

§ 8. The fund assigned for the maintenance of the endowed clergy, has, in the preceding section, been considered in reference to its professed object, as a bounty upon religious instruction. This bounty must of course be drawn from the people in some shape or other as a tax. An Establishment, therefore, must include, *Thirdly a compulsive obligation laid upon the community, to contribute to the propagation of the religious opinions embodied in the authorized standard.* This obligation being universal, the contributors divide themselves into two classes; the one consisting of those who do approve of the doctrinal instruction by that means provided, and the other, of those who do not.

Establish-
ments view-
ed as a tax.

Objection
on the
ground of
conscience.

With regard to the latter class, it constitutes not the whole, but by no means an inconsiderable part of the grievance, that they are compelled by the State to contribute to the propagation of what they conscientiously regard as error. A portion of the fruits of their industry, is diverted to maintain in influence and splendour the ministers of (it may be) a false religion; for on the same principle that the contributions of the nation are demanded in support of any one system, because it is the religion of the State, they may be exacted for the maintenance of any other system, be it Christian, or Mahomedan, or the worship of Juggernaut himself. Here then arises a question of religious duty, which may be put in this form: How would the Apostles and first Christians have acted, had they been called upon to contribute to the support of the Roman establishment? Would that species of tribute have been regarded by them as comprehended in rendering to Cesar the things that are Cesar's? or would not the demand have thrown them into the predicament of having to choose whether to obey God or man? The proper reply, in the writer's opinion, would be this, That if their contributing to the ecclesiastical institutions of the empire, did not expose them even to the appearance of sanctioning the established idolatry, they had no more reason for claiming an

exemption from such an impost, than from any other species of civil tribute, the application of which might not be less opposite to the spirit of Christianity. The question is, whether submission to an assessment, the payment of which is not optional, but compelled, can be considered as involving a participation in the responsibility attached to its application. If not, (and to the writer there appears no room for hesitation in deciding in the negative,) the subject is not justified in his disobedience to the requisitions of the civil magistrate.

But, although there may not be sufficient ground for resisting the demand of the State, when made in the form of a tax, the requisition may not the less be a grievance, as an act of essential injustice; for not only is the individual contributing in such a case to the support of what he regards as a pernicious system; he has also to furnish his voluntary contribution to the maintenance of the system of religion which he adopts: and he is thus placed by his dissent from the religion of the State, under the necessity of a double contribution, part arising from political, part from moral obligations. The plea usually advanced in defence of a compulsory mode of raising a fund for the maintenance of the clergy, is, that otherwise few would ultimately contribute any thing at "all." "Temptations of interest" would be

Objection on
the ground
of its ine-
quality.

“ in opposition to the duties of religion,” and
“ pretences of conscience” would be alleged
as “ an excuse for not sharing in a public bur-
“ then.” “ If,” continues Dr. Paley, “ by de-
“ clining to frequent religious assemblies, men
“ could save their money at the same time that
“ they indulged their indolence, and their dis-
“ inclination to exercises of seriousness and
“ reflection ; or if, by dissenting from the na-
“ tional religion, they could be excused from
“ contributing to the support of the ministers
“ of religion ; it is to be feared that many
“ would take advantage of the option which
“ was thus imprudently left open to them, and
“ that this liberty might finally operate to the
“ decay of virtue, and an irrecoverable forget-
“ fulness of all religion in the country.”* But
such an argument can hold good only thus far,
that all the members of the community should
be required to contribute, in definite propor-
tions, to the support of the ministers of reli-
gion. Where, therefore, proof could be ob-
tained, (and it obviously might be rendered ob-
tainable, under legal regulations which should
leave no room for evasion,) that this definite
proportion was actually contributed by the
individual to the maintenance of some religious
teachers, although not those of the Established
Church, there would be good ground for ex-
cusing the contributor from an assessment,

having for its professed design to compel the reluctant subscriptions of the mercenary and the irreligious. Dr. Paley himself refers to a mode of assessment adopted in the United States, which approximates, as nearly as taxation can do, to this equitable arrangement.

“ In this scheme it is not left to the option of
 “ the subject, whether he will contribute, or
 “ how much he shall contribute, to the main-
 “ tenance of a Christian ministry; it is only
 “ referred to his choice to determine by what
 “ sect his contribution shall be received.”

The grievance sustained where no such option is conceded by the State, is yet further aggravated by the circumstance already adverted to, that the fund to which, after paying his quota of voluntary aid to his own sect, the individual is compelled to contribute his full proportion, is not exclusively applied to its professed object—the maintenance of the ministers of religion; but, to the extent to which the bounty is not employed in the production of actual service, goes to feed the source of a corrupt influence. The assessment, therefore, is unjust, inasmuch as it is excessive; excessive just so far as what is raised is superfluous for purchasing the requisite supply of instruction. To reconcile him to this overcharge, this one consideration may, however, possibly present itself; that the excessive bounty has the

Objection on
 the ground
 of its appli-
 cation.

effect of “ bribing the indolence” of those whose activity would only conduce still more powerfully to the dissemination of error.

PALEY.

But “ the authority of a church establishment is founded on its utility.” Since, then, all participate in the advantages resulting from its influence on society at large, all are bound to contribute to its maintenance. This is a favourite argument with those who assume it as an admitted principle, that the Establishment is, to use a hackneyed phrase, the *palladium* of social order, the soul of all good magistracy, “ the bulwark of pure religion and the pillar of Divine truth.” Be it so; admit that Dissenters should be compelled to share in its support because they share in its advantages. We affirm that the operation of Dissent is at least equally beneficial to society at large; that the members of the Establishment participate in the good effects resulting from its influence; and that they should, on this principle, be compelled also to contribute to the maintenance of Dissenting teachers. This assertion must be proved, notwithstanding that it may lead to a somewhat invidious train of comparison.

Bp. HOWLEY'S Prim. Charge.

In what consists, and by what is evinced, the beneficial influence of the Establishment, as regards society at large? Does it respect an attendance upon the ordinances of Christian worship? Then, since the provision made by the Es-

tablishment is confessedly inadequate (not to speak of any deficiency of adaptation) to the wants of the population, the circumstance of an additional provision being voluntarily made by the Dissenters, at their own cost, must, one would think, claim to be considered as of some benefit to the community; unless it would be better, that is, more beneficial to the State, that the people should not worship God at all, than that they should attend upon "a worship which makes them Dissenters."* Were we to take the aggregate of attendants, instead of the aggregate of places of worship, as the basis of the comparison, it would not perhaps be overstating the fact to affirm, that one half of the population who actually attend Divine worship on the Sunday, are to be found worshipping within the walls of non-established conventicles. Whatever benefits, as regards the interests of morality, are connected with the observance of the Lord's day, and an attendance upon the means of religious instruction, the nation is a debtor

* "In the most populous parishes, places of worship, according to the Church of England, are notoriously deficient. The people have no option but the entire neglect of all Divine worship, or the attendance upon a worship which makes them dissenters from the Establishment.... The parish church, open perhaps only once on the Sunday, is insufficient to accommodate the rich, and in too many places is almost shut against the poor." EARL HARROWBY'S Speech, 18th June, 1812.

for one half, therefore, of those benefits, to the Dissenters. Does the beneficial influence of the Establishment display itself in a reverence for the laws? There are circumstances which would lead us to think that the influence of Dissenting institutions is not inferior in this respect. Notwithstanding all that has been alleged concerning the tendency of Calvinistic preaching to promote licentiousness and to embolden crime, the fact is, that our jails and our hulks are filled with criminals who have been bred in a different school. The number of offenders who have received their education among the Dissenters, or attended upon the worship of the conventicle, bears no proportion to the culprits upon whom has been expended in vain the influence of the Establishment. If, again, the character of the population in a district where there is no Dissenting teacher, be compared with the moral condition of the same class of society, where the Dissenters are numerous, the inference from the contrast which will almost invariably present itself, will be not less in favour of the moral tendency of Dissent. Methodism, enthusiasm, puritanism, or whatever name may best describe the form the endemic shall assume, doubtless may be generated, and may call for the corrective influence of theatres* or

* Eight or nine clergymen, not very long since, attended in a body, for the purpose of sanctioning the performances of

fairs, in order to reclaim the wrong-headed multitude from a morose morality; but still, the ale-house and the jail will not be quite so much crowded. And as to that species of offence termed a riot, especially riots having for their object to prevent the performance of public worship, I am not aware that Dissent has ever had to answer for such breaches of the peace. Certainly Dissenting ministers have never, on such occasions, occupied the station of ring-leaders, although clergymen have. In fact, whatsoever other benefits may accrue to society from the Establishment, there is one species of beneficial influence, in the merit of which a full share must in candour be conceded to the Dissenters, and that is, on the part of their teachers, the influence of *example*. But further, is it in the spirit of zeal and active philanthropy to which the Establishment gives birth, that its salutary effects

a party of strolling players in a town in one of the eastern counties. A sermon is said to have been preached on the preceding Sunday, recommending *innocent amusements*. The understood object was, to oppose the Dissenters, and "The Hypocrite" was performed one night *by particular request*. Five years ago, it was remarked by the Grand Jury, that no district furnished so few criminal cases; at the last assizes, it produced an ample number, and the respectable inhabitants have found themselves under the necessity of establishing a private night patrol. This is by no means a solitary instance of the kind in England. The same policy has been resorted to in Geneva, in order to put down the *ultra-orthodox* in that city.

are discernible? Do those numberless benevolent institutions by which this country is rendered so illustrious in the eyes of other nations, together with the splendid combination of self-prompted agency by which they are rendered effective,—institutions for propagating the Gospel, for circulating the Holy Scriptures, for educating the poor,—do these originate exclusively with the Establishment? No: if indeed Bible societies, tract societies, sunday-schools, missionary societies, have any beneficial influence upon society, engendered as they are in the hot-bed of schism, forming as they do “the hive of Dissent,” for no very small proportion of that good, the country is fully aware that it is indebted to the Dissenters. Or is it in the advancement of piety in its own members, in the degree of intelligence which it serves to render general, in its tendency to meliorate the moral condition of the people at large, that the benefit of an Establishment consists? Let the state of education, the tone of morals, and the standard of piety, among the Dissenters, be impartially estimated, and the operation of non-established institutions will not appear to be less salutary. But the pre-existence of an Establishment is presumed to have conduced to the success of sectarian efforts. What, it is sometimes urged, would have been the state of things, had it not been for an Establishment? As it is not the design of these remarks to intimate that the Esta-

blishment has been of no utility, it will be sufficient to inquire in return, what would have been the state of things, including among those things the Establishment itself, had it not been for Dissent? * If, then, it be but admitted, (what

* “It may perhaps be thought an anomaly of sentiment,” says a distinguished minister of the Scottish Establishment, “that one so impressed with the need and the advantage of “an extended religious Establishment, should be equally decided as to the advantage of a most zealous, active, and “unrestrained dissenterism. If the former were armed with “such a power of intolerance as would enable it to crush the “latter, instead of a blessing it would prove a curse to the “country which sustained it. It would soon be overrun “with indolence and corruption, and the various evils which “are ever sure to result from the exercise of a secure and “independent patronage.—For the accomplishment of this “object,” (the infusing of fresh vigour into the existing Establishments,) “we shall ever look upon Dissenters as great “moral benefactors of their country. They call forth a “most salutary reaction in the church. They exert a most “salutary control over the dispensers of patronage. They “do make such progress at times as to perplex and alarm “the bigots of an Establishment. But such we believe to “be the native preference of our people for our Establishments, that we feel quite confident and secure that Dissenters never will make more progress than they deserve “to make; and that they never will obtain such an ascendancy over the mind of the country, as to lead to the “subversion of its religious establishments, till these establishments deserve to be subverted. With a single “view to the moral and religious character of our people, “we hail Dissenters as our best and most valuable auxiliaries. We look upon them as indispensable friends, whose “services we cannot spare. We disclaim all sympathy with

only the most besotted bigotry can deny,) that the operation of Dissent has been to any extent beneficial in its influence upon the moral condition of society, the members of the Establishment, all who have any stake in the country, must be considered as participating in the advantages arising from Dissent; *therefore*, by parity of reasoning, they should be compelled to contribute to the maintenance of Dissenting teachers.

It will not be imagined, that this is a conclusion which would be for a moment seriously urged for any other purpose than to expose the fallacy of the argument for compelling the contributions of the Dissenters to a church to which they do not belong, founded on the alleged utility of an Establishment. All that it is designed to shew, is, that the mutual obligations which the established and the non-established sects are under to each other, are not so unequal as to justify on the part of the former a claim to the full measure of assessment in support of its ministers from all the members of the latter.

A large class of contributors, however, is

“ those who are ashamed, or with those who are afraid of
“ them. We should like to see every badge and remnant
“ of inferiority taken from off their persons, and are most
“ thoroughly convinced, that their full and equal admission
“ into all the offices of the state, is an essential step in the
“ progress of an enlightened policy.”—CHALMERS’S Sermon
on the Death of the Princess Charlotte. *Appendix.*

composed of those who professedly approve of the doctrines and discipline of the Establishment. There can be no question, whether *they* ought to contribute to the support of the church to which they belong; the only question is, whether they should be *compelled* to contribute, whether this contribution should be exacted in the shape of an assessment, and if so, what mode of assessment is the least exceptionable.

Into this subject I shall not enter further than to remark upon the great, the radical change which is introduced into all the institutions of Christianity, as the inevitable consequence of an Establishment. "In the beginning " it was not so." The first ministers of Christianity disdained the reluctant tributes of those on whom the motives of the Gospel had no power. In their view, the disposition of the giver was every thing :* "Every man according as he " purposeth in his heart, not grudgingly, or of " necessity." No specific sum was exacted, no kind of compulsive authority employed; they contented themselves with simply appealing to the generosity—the gratitude of believers: "If " we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it " a great thing if we shall reap your carnal " things?" Surely, there was nothing miraculous in this method of providing for "the preserva- " tion and communication of religious know- " ledge." Whence, then, has it arisen, that

* See page 155.

Christianity has lost its Divine power of enforcing its own claims upon the hearts of men, so as to be driven to throw herself on the patronage of the secular power for a maintenance in the world? How is it to be explained, that the inspired writers did not foresee, or foreseeing did not provide for this delicate crisis in the affairs of the Church, which should necessitate so essential a change in its constitution, as is involved in the superseding of all voluntary demonstrations of obedience in the members of the Christian fellowship, by substituting for religious motives, the obligations of human law? "Let him that is taught in the word," says the Apostle, "communicate in all good things to him that teacheth:" but this precept, together with the motive by which it is enforced, is virtually abrogated by enactments which designedly render the teacher wholly independent of his people, lifting him at once above their control, their moral claims, and their gratitude.

It is readily granted, that upon "the scheme of voluntary contribution," much less in point of amount, would probably be raised for the maintenance of religious teachers, and that the fund thus obtained, would be drawn from only a portion of the community. Many would, no doubt, choose to save their money, by refusing to contribute any thing to the support of religion. It is worthy of consideration, however,

whether a fund might not by this means be raised, fully equal in amount to that proportion of the assessment which, in an Establishment, goes to the production of actual service, and whether its effective application might not subserve to a still greater extent the professed object of the bounty of the State. Should this prove to be the case, there can be little doubt that the cause of religion would be materially promoted by a recurrence to the primitive mode of supporting the teachers of Christianity, which left the ministry of the gospel to operate, in a way congenial to its character, its designed effects upon the world.

But, should it be admitted, that the maintenance of the teachers of religion, is an object to which, with the greatest propriety, the public money may be appropriated; it would still appear to be of vast importance, that the means of levying the requisite supplies, should be as free as possible from all tendency to alienate the minds of the people from the ministers of religion; for this would frustrate its very design. A prejudice thus excited, would be dangerous in the extreme to the spiritual interests of those whom the scheme was intended to benefit; inasmuch as Christianity, rendered disgusting and burdensome to them in one form, might, in too many cases, be rejected altogether. What, then, must be the moral, what the political ten-

The Tithe-system.

dencies of a system which absolutely merges the pastor in the tithe-collector; which is perpetually bringing into irritating collision the interests of the incumbent and those of the proprietor; which presents the ecclesiastical claimant, when simply prosecuting his legal rights, in the light of a rapacious intruder upon the profits of another's industry, and which gives to the laws themselves the character of oppression? Surely, if an Establishment must be maintained, this would seem to be at all events the worst conceivable mode of providing for its maintenance.*

§ 9. Fourthly: An Establishment *has the effect of placing the right of spiritual instruction at the disposal of the proprietors of the soil.*

Whatsoever claims the episcopal clergy may advance to an exclusively legitimate commission to instruct and to convert mankind, as derived from their apostolical ordination, it is their being established which alone gives to those claims any real consequence or effect in the minds of the people. Were it not for this circumstance, their pretensions would be as in-

* In reference to this most complicated and most important subject of political economy, I cannot resist taking the opportunity of directing the public attention to a very masterly Review of the question, both as regards the expediency of some plan of commutation, and the absurdity of the clamour raised by the tenacious advocates of "irrevocable, "prescriptive right," in the Eclectic Review for Sept. and Dec. 1817. (Vol. viii. New Series.)

nocuous as those of the Roman Catholic episcopacy in our own country, by which this land of heretics is still partitioned out into titular dioceses, under the supremacy of our holy father the Pope. The effect of the Establishment is, to give a political shape and substance to these ghostly claims, and to aggravate by considerations of personal interest, the feelings naturally generated by the spirit of the order. The endowed minister regards the intrusion of a sectarian minister into his neighbourhood, as a direct invasion of his legal prerogative. It is not simply because the licensed teacher presumes to exercise an unauthorized ministry, that his schismatical labours are viewed with jealousy and contempt, although this, in the eyes of a thorough episcopalian, is in itself an inexpiable offence; but because, as tolerated by the State, he asserts an equal right to teach the very subjects of the church-man's spiritual domain. The parish, with all the souls which it contains, is the allotted cure of the clergyman, within which he considers himself as invested with a sort of patent right to administer instruction, and it is his labour to impress the people with the same notion. Hence those reiterated exhortations to keep to their church, to beware of the sectaries,* which are to be heard continually

* The following declaration, worthy in every respect but

Primary
Charge.

even from evangelical preachers within the Establishment. Hence the attempt to represent Dissent as a factious opposition to constituted authorities. Hence the language employed to shew the importance of the *national* system of education, as avowedly a counter-project necessitated by the pernicious activity of *fanaticism* in promoting the education of the lower classes. “Every populous village,” declares the present Bishop of London, “unprovided
“with a national school, must be regarded
“as a strong-hold abandoned to the occupation of *the enemy*.” Whence can originate this irritation and feverish alarm at witnessing benevolent and disinterested exertions, having for their sole object the instruction and melioration of mankind, but from the idea that they infringe upon the chartered rights of the established clergy,—rights of the nature of

its imbecility, of the priesthood of Rome, is pasted, in a printed form, in the Prayer-books of all the children belonging to a national school in a country town. “This I
“am sure of, so long as you continue in our communion,
“you are in the communion of the true church of Christ.
“I dare answer for the salvation of all those who continuing
“in our church, live up to the principles of it. But I
“dare answer nothing for them, who being brought up in
“this church, and having so great opportunities given
“them of knowing the truth, do yet depart from it. I pray
“God they may be able to answer for themselves.

“R. M. M.”

prerogative, which when they cease to be exclusive, cease to exist,—the rights of a spiritual monopoly? But whatever prerogatives of this description, real or imaginary, attach to an endowed clergy, can arise only from their being appointed by the State. This right to teach may be considered as a part of that ecclesiastical property, of which a clergyman becomes possessed on the presentation of the patron or proprietor of the benefice, and which he devolves upon the curate as his delegate; a *local title* of this kind, derived from appointment to a specific cure, being a necessary pre-requisite to holy orders. Whether ordination or appointment be the source of this supposed right, is, however, a matter of no moment. So far as it belongs to the established clergy, it belongs to them by virtue of the stations which they occupy, and those persons who have the disposal of the station, do in fact dispose of the rights annexed to it. It is unnecessary to state, that these persons are, to a great extent, the large landed proprietors; *they* are the class in whom is vested the hereditary privilege of providing the living with its occupant, and, consequently, the people with their spiritual guide. This right of presentation, is as much the patron's property, as the tithe is that of the rector; it is a sort of manor-right, which is to be taken

into consideration in the event of sale and purchase, like any other appendage to an estate. Upon this very ground, Dr. Paley argues in favour of the necessity of *tests*, because the system of patronage established in this country, “allows private individuals to nominate teachers of religion for districts and congregations to which they are absolute strangers.” The requisition of subscription, he represents to be merely “a restriction upon the exercise of private patronage.” “The laws speak to the private patron thus:—‘Of those whom we have previously pronounced to be fitly qualified to teach religion, we allow you to select one: but we do not allow you to decide what religion shall be established in a particular district of the country; for which decision you are not wise fitted by any qualifications, which, as a private patron, you may happen to possess. *If* it be necessary that the point be determined for the inhabitants by any other will than their own, it is surely better that it should be determined by a deliberate resolution of the legislature, than by the casual inclination of an individual, by whom the right is purchased, or to whom it devolves as a mere secular inheritance.’ *Where-soever, therefore, this constitution of patronage is adopted, a national religion must always*

“*necessarily accompany it.*” This, then, is the admitted fact, that patrons, who are in “no wise fitted by any qualifications to decide” what religion should be established, and who may be “absolute strangers” to the district for which they claim to nominate a teacher of religion, under the sole restriction of his being professedly of the established religion, have, by right of purchase or of inheritance, the appointment of Christian pastors. The State having decreed what shall be taught, they have the selection of the teacher. Power has decided the former point, Wealth has the determination of the latter; and thus the kingdom of Christ is shared between these confederate elements of the world!

Of the evils which result from the present corrupt state of ecclesiastical patronage, no one will attempt to dispute the existence; but “what plan, what system,” it will be said, “may not be perverted so as to become a source of abuse? Where the will of the inhabitants has had a share in determining the appointment, what tumults, what disgraceful animosities have arisen from the contest of parties!” This is true; but what do such occurrences prove more than this, that when secular emolument and dignity have become annexed to spiritual functions, no method of disposing of the office can be devised, which

shall not give rise to a conflict of personal interests, and endanger the formation of hostile parties? The spirit, the motives of men will always partake in some measure of the character of their object, and if its nature be but in part secular, the taint of secularity will inevitably diffuse itself through their actions. Popular elections in the Establishment, have the disadvantage of being grafted on a system of policy with which they have no natural agreement, and they by this means appear to be the cause of evils which spring in reality from the secularized character of the sacred office. Nevertheless, the result of ecclesiastical elections determinable by the will of the parishioners, is almost uniformly to secure an effective preacher. No one whose practice was at open variance with his doctrine, would risk the ordeal of such a contest; and this consideration alone outweighs a thousand objections to such a mode of appointment.

With regard, however, to the system of patronage, it is not any accidental circumstances connected with its administration, it is not mere abuses, which form the ground of the objection, but what is necessarily involved in the system itself. Who are the possessors, the proprietors of this world? What is their scriptural character? Who, under any conceivable change in human affairs which should

leave human nature itself unchanged, can we expect them to be, but such as the inspired writers emphatically denominate the men of this world; men who “discern not the things of the Spirit of God,” to whom they are foolishness, “because they are spiritually discerned?” Is there a sane individual who dreams, that the state of things will ever be so completely reversed, as that the mighty, and the noble, and the rich, who have their portion in this world, shall prevailingly embrace the spiritual religion of the Son of God, and the meek be, in this literal sense, the inheritors of the earth? Whatsoever may be in reserve among the undiscovered glories of the Millennial age, no intimations at variance with existing facts are afforded by the apostolic writers. They, on the contrary, leave us under the full impression of our Lord’s *hard saying*: “How hardly shall they who have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” They call us to hearken to this appeal: “Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?” But what is the effect of the scheme of an Establishment? It is to place the *poor* at the absolute mercy of the *rich*, in the matter of their salvation. It is to constitute men of this world judges as to who are qualified, and arbiters as to who shall be

James ii. 5.

allowed, to convert sinners like themselves, and to preach that gospel of the power of which they exhibit their own ignorance. It is to make the care of souls a profession, nay a merchandize, for the right to save them is annexed to the disposable *living*! It is to exclude the will of the people from all share in determining whether the person to whose guidance they are called mutely to surrender themselves, shall be a shepherd or a hireling, although they are the only parties interested, and they are infinitely interested, in the alternative. It is, in short, to offer the highest secular inducements to the irreligious or insincere, to take upon themselves the awful responsibility of an office which they are alike incompetent and indisposed to discharge, to impose upon the nation as instructors, blind leaders of the blind, and to prostrate the Christian ministry at the feet of the world, and the god of this world.

The advocate of Establishments has, in discussions like these, one great advantage: he can make himself easily intelligible to persons of all descriptions of character; he has no occasion to advert to topics on which it is unavoidable for the Christian to give offence, and on which he can hardly expect that mere politicians should feel the force of his reasonings. Yet, topics of this nature, if we would view an

Establishment in its most important bearings, it is impossible to avoid. We must tell the politician plainly, that how well soever he understands his own business, he does not enter into the genius of the Gospel of Christ; that his institutions, exquisitely adapted as they may be to secular objects, are utterly useless as means of promoting the triumphs of Christianity in the salvation of man. The melioration of society, by every expedient which may develop the intellectual faculties of the individual, and give a salutary direction to his active powers, or which, by strengthening moral restraints, may subordinate his passions to the general good, is the noblest object which human wisdom can achieve; but when, not content with this the appropriate sphere of its legislation, philosophy, or that which assumes the name of philosophy, proceeds to tamper with the *souls* of men, it is in the very nature of things impossible that its schemes should prove otherwise than abortive. Whatsoever may be intended by the spiritual Babylon, whose destruction forms so prominent a part of the yet unfulfilled records of prophecy, whatsoever may be comprehended in her predicted fall, can we suppose that those who participate in her guilty merchandise, stand in no danger of receiving of her plagues? If not, although the infidel may treat with ridicule the

idea of drawing arguments from the Apocalypse, and Protestants may deem it a sufficient exoneration from the charge, that they trade neither in masses nor in indulgences, there is still a significance in the expression which should prevent it from being lightly passed over: among the unhallowed riches of the mighty city are enumerated—"slaves and the
"souls of men."

An Establishment includes the virtual punishment of Dissenters.

§ 10. A Fifth objection to the scheme of an Establishment, founds itself on a circumstance which, if not hypothetically necessary, is, according to the representations of the advocates for Establishments, highly expedient as a co-incident part of the scheme, *viz.* the exclusion of Dissenters from eligibility to civil offices, or what may be termed *the virtual punishment of Dissenters*. The words, virtual punishment, are used, because it has been denied that such an exclusion has any thing in it of a penal nature. Bishop Warburton has devoted a chapter of his famous treatise of the "Alliance between Church and State," to proving that disqualification by a test law, is only a restraint, and not, in the true sense of the word, a punishment; that at least it was not intended to be such, but only "becomes a punishment *by accident*."

"To *punish* sectaries, in order to bring them
"over to the national religion, is," says his

Lordship, “plainly iniquitous; but to re-
“*strain* them from injuring the national reli-
“gion, is evidently just. Therefore, had the
“intention of the Legislature in this case been
“doubtful, yet, *a general law of a free people*
“would admit of no other interpretation.” The
only principle on which an established religion
and (what he considers as necessary to its
support) a test-law, are, in his view, suscep-
tible of vindication, is that of *civil utility*. Were
religion to be established and protected by a
test-law, on the mere ground of its being the
true religion, and opinions to be encouraged,
or discouraged, *as* opinions, then, he acknow-
ledges, that an Establishment would be, “1.
“*Unjust*, Because,” he argues, “the civil ma-
“gistrate as such, hath no right to determine,
“which is the true religion; this power not
“being given him on man’s entering into so-
“ciety. Nor could it be given him; because
“one man cannot empower another to deter-
“mine for him in matters of religion. There-
“fore, he not being judge, and there being no
“other to be found with authority to arbitrate
“between him and the several schemes of reli-
“gion, he hath no right to establish his own.
“Again, it is *unjust*, because, were the magis-
“trate a competent judge of what was *true*
“religion, he would have yet no right to reward
“its followers, or discourage its opposers; be-

“ cause matters of opinion belong not to his
 “ jurisdiction. He being, as St. Peter tells us,
 “ ‘ sent by God for the *punishment* of EVIL-
 “ ‘ DOERS, and for the *praise* of them that DO
 “ ‘ WELL.’ 2. An Establishment is *absurd*: it
 “ being impossible that the end of it should be
 “ attained. This end is the protection and
 “ support of *true religion*. But the civil ma-
 “ gistrate, who is to establish it, assuming to
 “ himself the sole authority of judging
 “ which is so, must necessarily conclude in
 “ favour of his own; so that the *established*
 “ *religion*, all the world over, will be the ma-
 “ gistrate’s: that is, for one place where the
 “ *true* religion is established, the *false* will be
 “ established in a thousand. And whether
 “ this be for the interest of *true religion*, let
 “ the maintainers of this hypothesis judge.”

Further ; “ The clergy’s right to a public
 “ maintenance, being (in that case) for the sup-
 “ port of opinions, would be contrary to the
 “ fundamental laws of society, by making men
 “ contribute to the maintenance of opinions
 “ which they reject and think false.” “ A TEST
 “ LAW, on this scheme, will be absolutely UN-
 “ JUST. For now, opinions being restrained as
 “ *errors*, not as *mischiefs*—*restraint* converts
 “ into *punishment*. For the design of a test is
 “ now, not to keep men of other religions out
 “ of the *civil administration*, but to bring them

“ into the *established church*. And its discouragements are those WHOLESOME SEVERITIES so warmly recommended, to reduce men from the *false* to the *true* religion. Where, if the first dose do not succeed, it must be repeated and enlarged till it does. This is *punishment*, properly so called; and punishment for what is no act of the will, we have shewn to be unjust. But were opinions, as such, liable to civil punishment, the civil magistrate could not inflict it; because his jurisdiction extends only to the care of bodies. Further, this is depriving men of their civil rights for matters of opinion, as such; but this we have shewn to be against the law of nature. On all these accounts, a test-law would be unjust. Again, a *test-law* on this scheme would be most mischievous, as *directly tending to the destruction of religious liberty*. For the end being to reduce men from the false to the true religion, the severities, as we say, must be increased till they have strength to operate effectually. *And there is no stopping short without exposing the scheme to the greatest absurdities*. Therefore, the more ingenious defenders of a *test*, on this scheme, are those who regard a toleration, not as a right of nature due to mankind, but as a concession which the necessity of the times extorted. For it is certain that *toleration*

“ and *such a test* can no more stand together
 “ on common principles, than liberty and per-
 “ secution. This,” remarks his Lordship in
 conclusion, “ is but a very short hint of the
 “ sad consequences which attend an established
 “ religion and a test-law on the *common hypo-*
 “ *thesis*,” which, as being so directly opposed
 to the projects of the “ great defenders of *civil*
 “ and *religious* liberties,” must needs lead them
 to “ think hardly of an established religion”
 having such a foundation, and tending, in that
 case, he admits, “ to the destruction of both.”

Bp. WAR-
 BURTON'S
 “ Alliance.”
 B. iii. C. 4.

That these consequences should have been
 foreseen as attendant upon an Establishment,
 according to “ the common hypothesis ;” that
 they should have been so fully appreciated, as
 to convince the writer that an Establishment is
 upon that hypothesis indefensible ; and yet,
 that a man of Warburton's gigantic intellect,
 should be able to impose upon himself so far as to
 imagine that the existing *fact* could be got rid
 of by means of a *theory* as to the true end of
 institutions which, upon any scheme, still exist
 the same ; this assuredly presents one of the
 most curious and inexplicable phenomena
 which the annals of controversy can furnish.
 Just as if the intended or pretended design of
 any measure, could of itself change the whole
 effect of its operation ! As if the words *civil*
utility introduced in the preamble of a bill,

which according to the natural construction of its design, would be unjust, absurd, mischievous, had the virtue of an incantation, to give a different form and tendency to the enactment!

Yes: "The true end for which religion is established, is, not to provide for the faith, but for civil utility:" this, says his lordship, "is the key to open to the reader the whole mystery of this controversy, and the clew to lead him safe through all the intricacies and perplexities in which it has been involved."

Vol. vii. p. 287.

Upon this principle it is, that what would otherwise be mistaken for *punishment*, must now be called *restraint*; what would otherwise be unjust, becomes equitable; what would otherwise be absurd, becomes politic and wise!

With regard, however, to the original intention of the Legislature in framing the Test-law, the Bishop is undeniably correct in stating, that it was restrictive and not punitive; and that Dissenters were only *by accident* included in its operation. "It was brought in by the

Test Act not intended to exclude Dissenters.

"patriots in the reign of Charles the Second, under their apprehensions of popery and a popish successor, and is styled, an 'Act for preventing dangers which may happen from popish recusants;' and the same is said to be its design in the preamble. And when, during the debate in the House of Commons, it was observed, that it was drawn in such a

BURNET'S Hist. Vol. i. p. 347-52. (first edit.)

“ manner as to comprehend the Protestant Dis-
 “ senters, the court-party endeavoured to avail
 “ themselves of that circumstance in order to
 “ defeat the bill. But the Dissenting members
 “ disappointed them, by declaring that they
 “ had rather confide in the justice and genero-
 “ sity of Parliament to pass some future bill in
 “ their favour, than be the occasion of retard-
 “ ing or defeating the security which the pre-
 “ sent bill was calculated to afford to the
 “ liberties of their country. And this genuine
 “ patriotism facilitated the passing of a bill
 “ then depending in the Commons, for their
 “ relief from the penal laws; which being sent
 “ up to the Lords, and coming down with some
 “ amendments, whilst the Commons were de-
 “ bating those amendments, the parliament was
 “ suddenly prorogued through the resentment
 “ of the Court, and the intended favour to the
 “ Dissenters prevented. And when afterwards,
 “ in the year 1680, a bill in favour of the Dis-
 “ senters, repealing the xxxv. Eliz. c. 1. passed
 “ both houses, and lay ready for the royal
 “ assent, the Court ventured upon a very ex-
 “ traordinary expedient: the clerk of the crown
 “ was ordered to convey away the bill; and
 “ accordingly, it was never afterwards to be
 “ found.” *This particular test could not, in-

GREY'S
 Parl. Deb.
 Vol. II. p.
 36, 38, 83.

Ib. Vol. II.
 p. 180.

BURNET.
ubi supra.
 p. 494.

* I am indebted for this statement to Dr. FURNEAUX'S
 Letters to Mr. Justice Blackstone, a work which was sup-

deed, when the law was framed, have been chosen with any express view to exclude Pro-

posed to have had no small influence in producing the very considerable alterations in the obnoxious passages so justly animadverted upon, which appeared in the subsequent edition of the "Commentaries." However familiar the above facts may be to those well acquainted with the history of their own country, it is strange how completely they have faded from general recollection. The following additional particulars are so important, that the reader will, I hope, excuse the length of this note. "In the same session (1680),
 "on the 16th of December, a bill was brought into the Com-
 "mons, 'for uniting his Majesty's Protestant subjects to
 "the church of England,' which repealed the declaration of
 "assent and consent, and some other particulars usually ob-
 "jected to by the Dissenters. And whereas it was appre-
 "hended this bill might not comprehend all the Dissenters
 "within the pale of the church, there was another bill
 "brought in at the same time, 'for exempting his Majesty's
 "Protestant subjects dissenting from the church of England,
 "from the penalties of certain laws;' which is the title of
 "the present Toleration act. Both these bills were read a
 "second time, and referred to the same committee. On
 "the 24th of December a bill was ordered into the Com-
 "mons, to repeal the act xiii. Car. 2. st. 2. c. 1. entitled,
 "An Act for the well-governing and regulating of corpora-
 "tions;' which had been made on purpose to exclude Dissen-
 "ters from corporation offices. On the 6th of January, this
 "bill was read a second time, and referred to a select com-
 "mittee. And in the mean time, on the 3d of January, a
 "bill came down from the Lords, entitled 'An Act for dis-
 "tinguishing Protestant Dissenters from popish recusants;
 "which was designed to comprehend a virtual repeal of the
 "Test, as to Protestant Dissenters. Understood in this la-

testant Dissenters, inasmuch as it was at that period no uncommon thing for some of their leading ministers, to receive the sacrament occasionally in the church of England, “in order
“to express their charity towards it as a part
“of the Church of Christ.” The ejected London ministers had, in 1662, held a consultation on this very subject, the result of which was

“titude, it seems a proper counterpart of the bill for the
“express repeal of the Corporation Act, at that time de-
“pending in the Commons. And indeed the Test Act could
“no way be repealed, with respect to Protestant Dissenters,
“so properly, as by distinguishing between them and popish
“recusants; the Act being designed to remain in force
“with respect to the latter, against whom it was originally
“intended. It is remarkable that, as far as it appears,
“there was no division upon any one of these bills. Never-
“theless, they were all defeated by the sudden prorogation
“of the Parliament on the 10th January; but four days after
“the last bill was sent down by the Lords: the Commons
“being apprized of the King’s intention only time enough
“to pass in haste a few votes on the state of the nation; the
“last of which is in these words: ‘That it is the opinion
“‘of this House that the prosecution of Protestant Dissen-
“‘ters upon the penal laws, is at this time grievous to the
“‘subject, a weakening of the Protestant interest, an en-
“‘couragement to popery, and dangerous to the peace of
“‘the kingdom.’ The Parliament was soon after dissolved
“by proclamation. Thus, the continuance of the Test Act,
“to the present time, and the exclusion of Dissenters from
“all public offices, is the reward they enjoy for their gene-
“rous and disinterested patriotism.” Letter vi. p. 178. *Note.*

an agreement to hold *occasional communion* with the established church; and this judgement Mr. Howe, in a tract written in vindication of those ministers who continued to adhere to the practice, represents as having been adopted by “their fellow-sufferers throughout the nation, “*ever since.*” There can be no doubt that this example of their ministers would be extensively followed by the people. What chiefly led to the discontinuance of the practice, was the enactment of the Test itself; many of the ministers, after that period, abstaining from it, “because they would not act upon a suspicious “motive, and because they disapproved of the “use of a religious ordinance as a civil test:” but this consequence of appointing the sacrament as a test, could not have been foreseen when the bill was drawn: and it is therefore, upon the whole, sufficiently evident, that the exclusion of the Dissenters, was not the intention of the Legislature.

But in whatever light we view the enactment itself, as regards either its abstract character, or its primary design, its operation is certainly that of a *punishment*. For what is a punishment, but the infliction of some privation, on account of non-compliance with the requisition of some law? To say that exclusion from eligibility to office is no privation, is to maintain, that all the subjects of the State have not

Test Act has
a penal operation.

WARBUR-
TON.

equal rights. Admitting that “reward is not
“one of the sanctions of civil society,” and
that consequently no subject has any right
of claim to an actual share in the honours
and profits which it is the magistrate’s pre-
rogative to dispose of according to his plea-
sure; still, not to be rewarded, as a matter
of favour, is one thing; to be incapacitated for
receiving that favour is another; for in the sup-
posable case of that legal incapacity being the
only bar to the royal favour, the law in which
it originates, inflicts upon the individual a posi-
tive injury. The prerogative of the magis-
trate, how absolute soever as regards any fo-
reign control, could never be intended to be ex-
ercised without respect to equitable desert or
suitable qualifications in those who are candi-
dates for his favour. The discretionary trust
which is confided to the executive power, has
for its object the general good; and although it
is not annulled by being abused, it is abused
whenever it is arbitrarily, that is to say un-
wisely or unjustly exercised. But in this case,
the prerogative itself is restricted, by the law
which prevents the civil magistrate from calling
into the public service those whom he might deem
qualified by their talents and their virtues for
offices of trust, in every other respect but that
factitious incapacity which arises from non-
compliance with the test. If the disqualifi-

cation of good subjects for serving their country and their monarch, be not a punishment, it is at least an injury ; and since the only difference between the two, is, that the one is merited, the other undeserved,—punishment being a sanction of law, injury, a violation of right,—we may leave the apologists for such enactments to choose which branch they please of the alternative.

An assertion of Blackstone's has been already referred to, that "the crime of Non-conformity is by no means universally abrogated."

Non-conformity no crime, and yet treated as such.

The learned Commentator is, however, on this point, at issue with legal authorities of the highest character. Mr. Justice Foster, in his argument in the cause between the city of London and the Dissenters, affirmed that "the Toleration Act renders Non-conformity no longer a crime." "It is not to be considered," he said, "merely as an act of connivance and exemption from the penalties of former laws; it doth, in my opinion, declare the public worship among Protestant Dissenters to be warranted by law, and entitled to the public protection."* "The Toleration Act," said Lord

* Mr. Justice Foster's reasoning proceeded upon the following arguments. The Act "not less than four times, upon different occasions, speaks of the religious worship practised among them as a mode of worship *permitted* and *allowed* by that Act. What is this but saying, that it is

Mansfield, in his speech in the House of Lords, on the same case, “renders that which was ille-

“warranted by law? The magistrate may sometimes con-
 “nive where he cannot punish or reform; but what the Le-
 “gislation permits, allows, and takes under its protection,
 “ceaseth from that moment to be an offence. When it en-
 “forceth former laws made for obliging all persons to resort
 “to Divine service on the Lord’s day, the attendance upon
 “Divine worship among the Dissenters is made equivalent to
 “their attendance at the Churches established by law.”
 With regard to the penalties, moreover, inflicted by the Act
 of Toleration upon persons maliciously disturbing public
 worship, Dissenting meeting houses are “expressly put
 “upon a level with cathedrals, parish-churches, and chapels;
 “and persons officiating as teachers or preachers in their
 “congregations, are exempted from serving on juries” and
 other burthensome offices, “*in as full a manner, and upon*
 “*the same principles, as the Established Clergy.*” FUR-
 NEAUX’S Letters to Blackstone. *Appendix.*—King Wil-
 liam, indeed, was anxious to give a still more complete effect
 to the Toleration: In a speech to the Parliament, he ex-
 pressed his earnest hope that, while they sufficiently pro-
 vided against Papists, “they would leave room for the ad-
 “mission of all Protestants that were willing and able to
 “serve.” And when a clause for repealing the Test as to
 Protestant Dissenters, inserted in the bill for settling the
 oaths, had been rejected by the house, the King, being re-
 solved to pursue his design, procured another clause to be
 proposed for insertion in the same bill, extending the quali-
 fication for office to all persons, who, “within a year before
 “or after their admission, should have received the sacra-
 “ment, either according to the usage of the church of Eng-
 “land, or *in any other Protestant congregation.*” This
 clause, however, was also rejected, notwithstanding the in-

“gal before, now legal ; the Dissenter’s way of
 “worship is permitted and allowed by this Act ;
 “it is not only exempted from punishment,
 “but rendered innocent and lawful ; *it is esta-*
 “*blished* : it is put under the protection, and is
 “not merely under the connivance, of the Law.
 “In case those who are appointed by law to
 “register Dissenting places of worship, refuse
 “on any pretence to do it, we must, upon appli-
 “cation, send a mandamus to compel them.
 “Now there cannot be a plainer position, than
 “that the Law protects nothing, in that very
 “respect in which it is in the eye of the Law,
 “at the same time, a crime. Dissenters, within
 “the description of the Toleration Act, are
 “restored to a legal consideration and capa-

fluence of the Court in its favour. (TINDAL’S Continuation, 8vo. vol. I. p. 120.) “The clergy,” says Bishop BURNET,
 “began now to shew an implacable hatred to the Non-con-
 “formists, and seemed to wish for an occasion to renew old
 “severities against them.” This chiefly occasioned the failure
 of the Bill of Comprehension in the same year (1689).
 But what contributed to it, was the still more remarkable
 conduct of the political party the most favourable to the
 Dissenters, who withheld their support because it was not
 agreeable to their policy of keeping up a strong faction both
 in Church and State, “to suffer so great a body as the Pres-
 “byterians to be made more easy, or more inclinable to the
 “Church. They thought that the Toleration would be best
 “maintained, when great numbers should need it, and be con-
 “cerned to preserve it.” BURNET’S Hist. of his own
 Times. B. v. (1689)

“city; and an hundred consequences will from
“thence follow, which are not mentioned on
“the Act.”

The most natural and most equitable consequence, however, of their being recognised as good subjects, has *not* followed: the Test still exists, which imposes as a condition of service, a political duty which conscience forbids them to fulfil. And the *direct* operation of this restriction, is but a part of its effect. A visible line of distinction is by this means drawn between the conformist and the separatist, which tends more than perhaps any other circumstance, to perpetuate against Dissenters as such, prejudices militating against the best interests of society. Men in their civil intercourse with each other, would forget their religious distinctions, were it not for the political prejudices which an Establishment infuses into their minds against those of a different caste. What is it that keeps back from cordially coalescing in one common cause, the members and ministers of differing denominations of Protestants? “What is implied in
“those hostile terms, Churchman and Dis-
“senter? Is it a difference of theological senti-
“ment, such as parts the maintainers of oppo-
“site creeds; the Romanist, for instance, from
“the Protestant? No: those terms denote
“only a difference of ecclesiastical polity, con-
“nected with an invidious difference of politi-

“cal predicament.” This it is which makes the same Christianity under unimportant modifications, pass with the common people for different religions, leading them to mistake the form for the substance, and which conceals from the better informed and the sincere on either side, the knowledge that as Christians and as Protestants they are brethren. So long as a test-law exists, a pretence is afforded, of which the bigot and the interested will gladly avail themselves, to represent those who lie under this disability, as men disaffected to one part of the constitution, a sort of “half-Englishmen,” and to persuade the lower classes that their going to church, is a branch of their civil duty ; which duty they accordingly consider as half-discharged if they do not go to the conventicle, and so, it is a chance that they go no where. Not all the refinements of the theorist, will avail to make simple people think otherwise than that Dissenters are in fact excluded from office because they are not altogether fit to be trusted, and that what is thus punished must needs be a crime. The test-law, which shuts them out from power, deprives them too as a body of that honourable influence and consideration, which would set them above the petty oppression of opinion. Thus, in every point of view, it operates as a punishment.

A test-law is not necessary to the existence

Test-act in-
expedient.

of an Establishment. The Church of England existed before the Test Law was enacted. The Church of Scotland is established without one. An exclusive right to all civil as well as ecclesiastical offices and dignities, cannot then be essential to the idea of an Establishment; nor can it be admitted to be necessary for its security. "An equitable disposition in the Church to permit all without exception to enjoy, in their full extent, their natural rights," would, as has been justly remarked, "be a much greater security to her, than any exclusive or even penal laws."* For against whom can a test secure her? Only against persons whose scruples shew them to be at least honest, if not pious men. A test has no force but in proportion as the men it is intended to disqualify, are under the influence of religious principle. Thus, their very punishment carries with it their panegyric. Men whose unbribed loyalty is of so much the less suspicious origin, as it rests on attachment to the laws, rather than on the enjoyment of immunities; men who love their country not the less for being restrained from serving it; men, whose regard for religion and public morals, is evinced by their furnishing a double share of contribution towards the support of Christian ministers; men who believe, without a premium for believing, and who honour the sacra-

FUR-
NEAUX'S
Letters.

ment so highly as to tremble at profaning it; these are the persons, the only class of Protestants, against whom the Test thus unjustly, not to say fraudulently, perverted from its original design, can avail as a security. And its utility consists in excluding these men from the civil administration! On any other ground than this, it would be confessedly absurd and unjust! Viewed as a punishment, it would be “plainly iniquitous!”

Such then are the objections which lie against the scheme of an ecclesiastical Establishment, viewed chiefly as a measure of political expediency; and surely they are sufficiently strong to vindicate the principles of Dissenters from the charge of originating in “weakness of intellect,” “perverseness of temper,” or factious “discontent.” This was the point to be established, and the engagement being completed, the writer ought here, perhaps, to lay down the pen. There is, however, one remaining consideration which presses upon his mind with so much force, that he cannot but advert to it; yet, were he conscious of being influenced in this work, by the views or feelings of a partisan, it is a subject into which he would not carry the warfare.

§ 11. The “true end” of an Establishment, is acknowledged to be civil utility. In this necessary limitation of its design, may be per-

Establishments oppose the free exercise of the Christian ministry.

ceived one reason that it cannot be adapted to any higher ends. How perfect soever as a political expedient, it must of necessity leave the ends which it was not intended to promote, to be secured by other means. And so far as its operation interferes with the adoption of those other means, it directly obstructs the attainment of the higher end.

The ministry of the Gospel was not instituted with any view to civil utility; it is a means of a purely spiritual character, having reference to objects as vastly transcending in importance every thing with which the speculations of politicians are conversant, as eternity is longer than time. It has one simple end, to which as a means it is perfectly and exclusively adapted; that end is the salvation of the soul. Its perfection consists in its simplicity, and its universality; while its efficiency depends upon the promised agency of the Spirit of God; and as these its peculiar characteristics were most strikingly displayed before it had any alliance with wealth or power, when it was employed in defiance of their utmost efforts of opposition, so it is incapable of being aided in its Divine achievements, it cannot but be injured, by a combination with secular means of human invention.

An Establishment involves a direct interference with the ministry of the Gospel, the

only instituted means of converting and of saving mankind, under the pretence of perfecting, or regulating, or aiding its operation. And what is the effect of its interference? To restrict the freedom, to corrupt the motives, to fetter the exertions, to circumscribe the sphere of those whom it seduces by its patronage, and all this under the plea of ecclesiastical order and civil utility! Hardly does it tolerate that the Gospel of Christ should be preached without its orders. A man must needs have the warrant of Jesus Christ countersigned by the State, before he has the temerity to execute it: and even then, he is forbidden to preach in unconsecrated places; he must not “convert souls at uncanonical hours.” Before Christianity was taken into alliance by the secular power, if Christ was preached, though it were on a principle of opposition or party-strife, still, the deed was acknowledged to be good, and an Apostle could rejoice in the result; but now, let the motive be never so pure, the action, if certain conditions are violated, is esteemed criminal. The success of Dissenting teachers in turning sinners from the error of their ways, in furthering the salvation of mankind, is angrily deprecated, from the apprehension that their success may endanger the Establishment. “Go ye into all the world,” said our Saviour, “and preach the Gospel to every

“ creature.” What is this that dares interpose its authority and command us to forbear?

“ As to Church Establishments,” ingeniously remarks an excellent clergyman, “ they cannot be sent into heathen nations. It is the labour of the Missionary which in this service the Church must employ.”* The cumbrous machinery of a hierarchy is obviously not adapted to it. Nay, the principles upon which Establishments rest, both forbid such an invasion of the prerogative of a foreign state, and supply a directly counter-active force. The episcopal minister must not only go forth unprotected by an Establishment; he goes to encounter, to subvert one, to oppose spiritual to carnal weapons, to fight against the very policy which at home he pursued. He must lay aside, he must forget his former principles, or they will incapacitate him for action. He must take his stand upon opposite principles, and he must promulgate sentiments the very reverse of those which, as a member of an ecclesiastical Establishment, he may have once avowed. He will have now to contend, that the State has in matters relating to human salvation, no authoritative claims: that men at the peril of their souls accept its bounty, as an inducement to believe; or fear, in obeying the dictates of conscience, any other being than “ Him who is able to cast both body and

COOPER'S
*Letter to
Lloyd.*

“soul into hell;” that the word of God must be their only rule and standard, and that this is of itself, “able to make them wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” The preaching of the Gospel will now approve itself as the *only* means of operating a change on the hearts and characters of men; and the rudest teacher, who is evidently acting under the influence of a concern for the souls of men, will be hailed by him as an auxiliary. All the state trappings of legitimacy will be thrown off as a useless incumbrance. It is the king’s armour, but he has not “proved it;” he “can-
 “not go with these;” he must go in all the plainness of a defenceless shepherd. The enemy may come, as befits him, “with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield;” but his armour and his weapon must be, “The name of the Lord of hosts.”

1 Sam. xvii.
39.

But it is not with regard to heathen countries alone, that the genius of an Establishment exhibits itself in direct opposition to the genius of the Christian ministry. Here the contrariety is glaringly palpable. By whom have missionary labours been discountenanced, ridiculed, deprecated, but by members of the Establishment? By whom are heartless objections petulantly and malignantly brought forward against the only attempts made within the Church of England, to emulate the exertions of other deno-

minations of Christians, but by ministers, by dignitaries of the Establishment? The country appreciates the fact. The same spirit of jealousy on the part of the endowed order, the same tenacity of ecclesiastical prerogative, carried to the utmost refinements of etiquette, have constantly operated, under different modifications, to prevent in Christian countries the free propagation of the Gospel. Every where, the Christian minister has been withstood by this Proteus, ecclesiastical polity, in some one or other of its various forms, standing, like Satan at the right-hand of Joshua, "to resist him." Every where the spirit of evangelical zeal has been repressed and fettered by State regulations, and religious liberty served as a traitor. And wherefore, but because, upon the system of Establishments, there is not a spot of the soil upon which the intrusive preacher can tread, that is not already spiritual property; not a single fellow-creature, whom he can address concerning "righteousness and judgement to come," that is not already the bespoke subject, or the productive tributary of the priest of the district? And should he succeed in obtaining hearers among the ignorant, and making converts of the abandoned, what is to indemnify the established instructor for this invasion of his empire, and the consequent deduction from his gains?

§ 12. “ And do we yet,” exclaims that most illustrious non-conformist, John Howe, “ enter-
 “ tertain in our minds any hope that the
 “ Christian religion shall spread, and be more
 “ generally propagated in the world? Or do
 “ we desire it should? Or do we dread that it
 “ should not, through our default? Let us then
 “ look back to the years of ancient time, and con-
 “ sider what it was when it grew and increased
 “ mightily; when, without other advantages
 “ than its own self-recommending excellency,
 “ it every where made its own way, subdued
 “ nations, proselyted enemies, defied the most
 “ fervent oppositions and persecutions; when
 “ the professors and preachers of it triumph-
 “ ed over martyrdoms, the fierceness and fury
 “ of wild beasts and flames, overcame by the
 “ blood of Jesus and the word of his testi-
 “ mony, not loving their lives unto the death;
 “ when, as Pliny writing to Trajan in favour
 “ of the Christians, intimates to him, they were
 “ every where so encreased both in cities and
 “ countries, that the Pagan temples had lain
 “ almost desolate, and that there had scarce
 “ been any to buy off their sacrifices; when,
 “ (about a hundred years after,) Tertullian re-
 “ presenting in apology for them, their peace-
 “ ableness, and how easy it were, otherwise,
 “ to them to relieve themselves of their suffer-
 “ ings, says, they were become so numerous

Establish-
 ments an
 obstacle to
 the final
 triumph of
 Christianity.

“ in the empire, that if it were possible for
“ them to withdraw themselves into some re-
“ mote, obscure place, they who were left
“ would even tremble at their own solitude.
“ Christianity was then all life and spirit. The
“ Christian church in those days, flourished
“ in purity, power, and vigour. But when,
“ for the space of about three hundred years
“ together, it had enjoyed the protection and
“ benignity of Christian emperors, and was
“ hereby become wanton, lost in carnality, not
“ content with itself and its own native comeli-
“ ness, but affected to shine in a borrowed
“ lustre and ornature; when, as harlots are
“ wont, it began to paint, to be fond of gay
“ attire, and devise things for deckings to
“ itself most alien from its original state and
“ constitution; (and which afterwards became
“ the matter of bloody contentions and cruel-
“ ties;) when it grew ambitious of secular
“ pomp, splendour, grandeur, and power; then,
“ it was so forsaken of God and his Spirit,
“ that within a very few years after Boniface
“ the Third had obtained of the emperor Pho-
“ cas, the title of universal bishop, began the
“ senseless delusion of Mahometanism to
“ spring up without the Church; and assisted
“ by the incredible accession of force and arms,
“ came at length to prevail against it, (now
“ gradually sinking more and more into vice

“ and ignorance,) unto that degree, that in
“ process of time, what Christianity had gain-
“ ed from Paganism, it lost in a great mea-
“ sure to Mahometanism; so that in several
“ parts of Christendom, where were reckoned
“ thirty Christians for one Pagan, there came
“ to be thirty Mahometans for one Christian.
“ And how, next to anti-Christian the Chris-
“ tian world is, very generally Protestant as
“ well as Popish, is too well known.*

“ Let it now be considered for how many
“ sad centuries of years, Christianity hath
“ been at an amazing stand! got no ground
“ upon the whole, but rather lost much! Is
“ this the religion which so early, by its own
“ native light and power, conquered so many
“ nations, and which we expect to be the reli-

* “ In about three hundred years after the ascension of
“ Jesus,” remarks the learned Author of ‘ The Credibility
“ of the Gospel History,’ “ without the aids of secular
“ power, or church authority, the Christian religion spread
“ over a large part of Asia, Europe, and Africa: and at the
“ accession of Constantine, and convening the Council of
“ Nice, it was almost every where, throughout those coun-
“ tries, in a flourishing condition. In the space of another
“ three hundred years, or a little more, the beauty of the
“ Christian religion was greatly corrupted in a large part of
“ that extent, its glory defaced, and its light almost extin-
“ guished. What can this be so much owing to, as to the
“ measures then set on foot, and followed in succeeding
“ times ?” LARDNER’S Works, 4to. Vol. II. p. 353.

Works, 8vo.
Vol. iv. p. 89.

“ gion of the world? Who that understands
“ this, would not with deepest concern and
“ anxiety of spirit, inquire into *the cause*.”

And can Christianity have lost its efficiency from any other cause than its having become corrupted by the inventions of man? Does not the moral aspect of the world, afford in itself convincing proof that what was designed to be the religion of the world, has been arrested in its progress? And what was it that could arrest the progress of a scheme, bearing so conspicuously the impress of the power and the wisdom of God? Not the opposition of man, not the utmost rage of heathen persecutors, not the exterminating tortures of martyrdom: these could not for a moment retard the spread of Christianity, so long as its spiritual character refused to blend with worldly elements, because it is in the very nature of purely spiritual things to be indestructible. These could not possibly endanger the Church, so long as Christians stood fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, because the mind of man requires but to be set free, in order to be invincible. But when the very same means which had been ineffectually opposed to Christianity, were called in for the purpose of extending its empire, and the rulers of this world undertook to protect and aid the weakness of the Divine instrumentality, by a more

excellent way of building up the Church of God, how could it be otherwise than that Christianity itself should seem to lose its power and vigour, owing to the fatal operation of these treacherous expedients? How could the patronage of the State involve less than dominion? A dominion the more terribly complete, inasmuch as being founded on the surrender of the conscience, it left no neutral territory in which the principle of freedom might expatiate. Again, the human mind passed under the yoke of captivity, unconsciously submitting to its fetters as an act of homage to the religion of Christ, the spirit of which was thus flagrantly violated. That faith which had overcome the world, was itself enslaved, and a thousand years rolled away before the imposture by which it had been accomplished, began to be suspected. During that period, Christianity seemed to reign, for she was arrayed in a gorgeous robe, but her sceptre was only a reed, and she was herself, a state prisoner, as her Divine Master had been, crowned only to be crucified; and her betrayers, like his, were her disciples, and she was betrayed for gold.

There is no way of accounting for the state of intellectual debasement and moral impotence, into which the nations of Christendom relapsed, but by ascribing it to the extinction of civil and religious liberty, consequent upon

the establishment of Christianity by the secular power. The advancement of knowledge is not more inseparably connected with political liberty, than the spread and vitality of the religion of the Gospel are with religious knowledge and religious freedom. When at the Reformation, the bonds of ecclesiastical tyranny were loosened, literature, and freedom, and religion revived together. And it must be so. It was not without reason that the Apostle Paul emphatically urged it upon the Corinthians: "Ye have been bought with a price. Be ye not the slaves of men." A spirit of slavish subjection is so incompatible with the spirit of Christianity, that religion must be first perverted, before it can possibly become the instrument of oppression. "Christianity," remarks Bishop Warburton, "naturally inspires the love both of civil and religious liberty; it raises the desire of being governed by *laws* of our own making, and by the *conscience* which is of God's own giving. Men practised in the exertion, and habituated to the enjoyment, of *religious rights*, can never long continue ignorant of, or bear with patience, the invasion of their *civil*. The human faculties can never long remain in so violent and unnatural a state, as to have these operations perpetually checking and defeating one another, by the contrary actions of two such opposite prin-

“ ciples, as love of freedom and acquiescence
 “ in slavery. The one or the other must, in a
 “ little time, prevail. Either the foul spirit of
 “ tyranny will defile the purity of religion, and
 “ introduce that blind submission of the under-
 “ standing, and slavish compliance of the will,
 “ into the Church; or else the Spirit of the Lord
 “ will overturn the usurpation of an unjust des-
 “ potic power, and bring into the State, as well
 “ as the Church, a ‘ free and reasonable service.’
 “ That grandeur and elevation of mind, that
 “ sublimity of sentiment, that conscious dig-
 “ nity of our nature, redeemed at so high a
 “ price, which true religion keeps alive; which
 “ Holy Scripture dictates; and which the
 “ Spirit of the Lord inspires; will be ever
 “ pushing us on to the attainment and pre-
 “ servation of those Civil Rights, which we
 “ have been taught by reason to know are
 “ ours; and which we have been made to feel
 “ by experience, are, of all ours, the most
 “ indispensable to human happiness.”

“ Alliance.”
 Book II.

On the Continent, in the very birth-place of
 the Reformation, the decay of religion has strik-
 ingly kept pace with the decline of the spirit
 of liberty. And to what is England, under Pro-
 vidence, indebted, for the preservation of her
 religious privileges? To what does she owe
 her present distinguished elevation as the depo-
 sitary of the Christian faith,—the Evangelist of

Nations? What has kept alive within this insulated corner of civilized Europe, the spirit of the Reformation, and made our country the centre of the moral world? Our Establishment? No; our liberties: liberties reluctantly wrung from Protestant tyranny, by the despised Puritans; liberties watered by the tears and fertilized by the blood of those whom the rulers of the Establishment rejected and persecuted; liberties, for the perpetuation of which the country is mainly indebted to the vital principle of Dissent. The clergy opposed the Reformation itself; they opposed the Toleration; they opposed the Comprehension; they opposed King William in all the measures which he attempted for the extension of religious liberty; they have opposed every subsequent act of relief to the conscientious dissident. They oppose the Bible Society; they oppose Missionary exertions; they opposed, till shamed and alarmed into the adoption of a specious plan of counter-acting policy, the education of the poor. And why have they opposed them, but because all these measures are felt to be directly hostile to the tendencies and the interests of an ecclesiastical Establishment? The circulation of the Bible endangers the Church; religious knowledge endangers it; religious freedom endangers it; civil freedom endangers it! Is there no ground for the suspicion that there are many, even now, who, but for the

restraints of the laws, would exult in reviving the Sacheverell war-cry, as the signal of a fresh crusade against religious liberty, and in consigning the nation again to the ghostly keeping of a vicarious priesthood? With fondness they are heard invoking the shades of the Stuarts; nay, some are even turning to Mother Rome herself with filial yearnings, and longing to be reconciled.

Dissenters, however, need have no apprehensions respecting their liberties; none respecting their cause: the former are too intimately linked with the best interests of their country to be again brought into jeopardy; the latter they believe to be the cause of the Gospel, which can never be in danger. But wherefore should the term Dissenters, be used in reference to feelings and interests which belong to no party, and in which, but for the unhappy influence of schismatical prejudices, all true Christians would participate? Dissent is itself a mere negation, an accidental predicament. But the principles on which Dissent is founded, are not the tenets of a sect; they are truths of a nature as universal as the sphere of Christianity, and they are of importance chiefly as conducive to its triumphs. Men may profess these principles, as they may hold any other class of speculative truths, without receiving, or exhibiting in their characters, their genuine

influence; they may in that case remain as secular, as servile, and as intolerant, as they could be rendered by the opposite principles. Many are Dissenters, as many are Christians, by chance, from education, or from prejudice. "Truth," however, as Howe remarks, "is not the less true, for that some hold it they know not how or why." There is such a thing as men being better and being worse than their principles. But as to the principles of civil and religious liberty in themselves, they have been the foundation of our national greatness; they are the only safeguard of our most sacred rights; they are inseparably connected with every thing that is distinguishing in the name and character of a Briton: what is more, it is only as these principles prevail, that the Gospel itself can have free course in the world, or that the true Church of Christ, emancipated, reunited, resuming once more her ancient character, shall have scope to renew her primitive triumphs, shaking to their foundations the kingdoms of darkness, and overturning the throne of that Anti-Christ "whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming."

THE END.

Printed by J. F. Dove, St. John's Square, London.

BOOKS RECENTLY PUBLISHED

AND SOLD BY

JOSIAH CONDER,

No. 18. ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD.

THE ECLECTIC REVIEW.

The **NEW SERIES** of the **ECLECTIC REVIEW**, commencing with January, 1814. In half-yearly Volumes. Vols. I. to IX. 6l. 15s. boards, or in monthly Numbers, 2s. 6d. each.

* * * The present **SERIES**, conducted by a new Editor, and supported by a considerable accession of talent in the different departments of the Review, claims to be considered as a new work, altogether distinct from the Old Series. Its characteristic features are, a prominent attention to Theological Literature and Biblical Criticism, and a firm and explicit maintenance of the principles of Civil and Religious Liberty; combining, with moral discussions, an attention to all the topics of general interest which fall within the compass of a Literary and Scientific Journal. "The Eclectic Review does not aspire to be considered as the *manifesto* of any party whatsoever, or as enunciating *ex cathedra* the sentiments of any persons but the private and obscure individuals who immediately conduct it."—*Eclectic Review* for Sept. 1816, p. 226.

MEMOIRS OF MRS. SAVAGE.

MEMOIRS of Mrs. **SAVAGE**, eldest daughter of the Rev. Philip Henry. By **J. B. Williams**, with a Preface. By Rev. **W. Jay**, 12mo. 5s.

PHILIP HENRY'S MSS. SERMONS.

EIGHTEEN SERMONS, selected from the **MSS.** of the Rev. **PHILIP HENRY**, A. M. including the last Sermon which he preached. To which are added, the **FUNERAL SERMON** of Mr. **HENRY**, by the Rev. *F. Talents*, A. M. and the **SUBSTANCE** of a **SERMON**, preached on the same occasion from his Father's Dying Words. By the Rev. *Matthew Henry*. With a *Fac Simile* of a Letter from Philip Henry. 8vo. 9s.

WATTS'S WORKS.

The **WORKS** of the Rev. **ISAAC WATTS**, D, D. in Nine Volumes, 4l. 14s. 6d. royal paper, 6l. 6s.

VINCENT ON PRAYER.

The Spirit of Prayer, or a Discourse on the Nature of Prayer; with directions for attaining the Gift of Prayer. By Nathaniel Vincent, M. A. A new edition, carefully revised. By **J. H. Hopkins**, 18mo. 2s. boards.

BUCK ON EXPERIENCE.

A **TREATISE** ON **RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE**, in which its Nature, Evidences, and Advantages, are considered. By the late Rev. *Charles Buck*. Fourth Edition. 12mo, 5s. boards.

"There is much in [this book] on which every Christian may meditate to advantage, and little that can give offence to any. Much seriousness and sincerity of mind, much reflection on religious subjects, much knowledge of the human heart, and of the manner in which Divine grace affects and improves it, are here displayed."—*British Critic, Old Series*.

FAMILY PRAYERS.

MAY'S FAMILY PRAYER BOOK, Abridged; containing Forms of Prayer for every Day in the Week. 2s. bound.

This excellent little work has gone through eight editions. Some of the Prayers, being rather long, are, in the present edition abridged, to make them more convenient for families in general; while their simple and scriptural strain renders them peculiarly adapted for the purpose of social worship.

REVIEW OF DR. MANT'S TRACTS.

CONSIDERATIONS on the **DOCTRINE** of **BAPTISM**, and on **CONVERSION**, as connected with the Subject of Baptismal Regeneration, and with the legitimate Discharge of the Pastoral Function. Reprinted from the *Eclectic Review*, May and June, 1816. 8vo. 2s.

Books recently published and sold by Josiah Conder.

THE ASSOCIATE MINSTRELS. The Second Edition; with additional Poems. Foolscap 8vo. 6s. boards.

"That poetical taste and genius abound among us at this period, much more, perhaps, than at any former time, has long been our firm persuasion. Were the matter doubtful, this volume alone, the work apparently of six or more writers, might almost decide it."—*British Critic*, April, 1811.

POEM ON THE BIBLE SOCIETY.

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO, (Glory to God in the Highest, and on Earth Peace, Good-will to Men.) A Poem in English blank verse; respectfully inscribed to the British and Foreign Bible Society. Elegantly printed in 4to. 1s. 6d.

"This is a highly animated effusion, in blank verse, in the sentiments of which we most cordially sympathize. The composition will be found throughout to breathe the same noble ardour, and is evidently produced by no mean or inexperienced hand."—*British Critic*, April, 1813.

MILTON'S LATIN POEMS.

The **LATIN and ITALIAN POEMS** of **MILTON**, complete: translated into English verse. By *Jacob George Strutt*. Post 8vo. 7s. 6d.

GREGOIRE ON SLAVERY.

On the **SLAVE TRADE**, and on the **SLAVERY** of the **BLACKS** and of the **WHITES**. By a *Friend of Men of all Colours*. Translated from the original French of M. Gregoire, formerly Bishop of Blois. To which are annexed, Prefatory Observations and Notes, by the *Translator*. 8vo. 3s. 6d.

"If you have a right to enslave others, there may be others who have a right to enslave you."—*PRICE on the American Revolution*.

"With such boldness is this pamphlet written, that we are surprised that its appearance was permitted in France: yet we find that it was published a short time before the return of Buonaparte from Elba. We thank the Translator for offering it to the English reader, and for the judicious remarks with which he has introduced it."—*Monthly Review for August*, 1815.

MISS TAYLOR'S WORKS.

ESSAYS in RHYME, on **Morals and Manners**. By *Jane Taylor*; Author of "*Display*," &c. Foolscap 8vo. 6s.

DISPLAY; a Tale. By *Jane Taylor*. With an elegant Frontispiece. Foolscap 8vo. 6s.

HYMNS for INFANT MINDS. By the Authors of "*Original Poems for Infant Minds*," &c. Tenth Edition. 1s. 6d. neatly half-bound.

"It is a very erroneous, though we fear a very prevalent notion, that the religious instruction of children must necessarily be confined within very narrow limits. The contents of this little volume serve to shew, that all the fundamental truths of revelation may be laid open to them with sufficient clearness and precision to enlighten their understandings, and in a manner well calculated to interest and affect their young hearts."—*British Review*, No. XIV. p. 208.

ORIGINAL POEMS for INFANT MINDS. By *Ann and Jane Taylor*. 2 vols. 3s. half-bound.

RHYMES for the NURSERY. By the same Authors. 1s. 6d. half-bound.

ORIGINAL HYMNS for SUNDAY SCHOOLS. 4d. stitched, or 3s. 6d. per doz.

For very high commendations of these exquisitely simple compositions, see *British Review*, No. XIV. *Christian Observer*, Nov. 1810, and *Eclectic Review*, Aug. 1810, and Jan. 1813.

Printed by J. F. DOVE, St. John's Square.

Bayerische
Staatsbibliothek
München

...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...

...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...

...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...

...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...

...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...

...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...

...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...

NO

Conder, Josiah, 1789-1855

On Protestant Nonconformity in two Volumes

Bd.: 2

London (1818)

H.ref. 76 s-2

urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10448801-4